

May Mizuno

From: Glenda_Georgens/MAUIDO/HIDOE@notes.k12.hi.us
Sent: Thursday, February 07, 2008 9:43 PM
To: HLTtestimony
Subject: FW: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

HB 2566

Strong Support

HB 2566

**LATE
Testimony**

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From: g.georgens@hotmail.com
To: hlttestimony@capitol.hawaii.gov
Subject: SB 2159, Relating to Professions
Date: Thu, 7 Feb 2008 21:16:16 -1000

**Department of Education
Maui District
Intensive Learning Center
Program Director**

DATE: **FEBRUARY, 08,2008**

TO: **The Honorable Representative Josh Green, Chair, The Honorable
Representative John Mizuno, Vice-Chair and Members of the
Committee on Health**

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HB 2566

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

I am testifying in strong support of SB 2159.

I have been a Mental Health Counselor for 20 years and have been working in the great state of Hawaii for the last five. Since living in Hawaii, I have been employed by the Department of Education as a Behavior Health Specialist IV and in the last year I was promoted to a BHS V.

I went through the licensing process to become a Mental Health Counselor in Hawaii as I began my move to Maui.

I did so in order to make the lateral move from my status of a LMHC in Massachusetts to an equivalent status

in Hawaii. As I researched the profession, I felt satisfied that the license of Mental Health Counselor here in

Hawaii would be the appropriate license that guaranteed the quality of mental health-care that I was accustomed

to in Massachusetts. I have been totally satisfied with the standards and expectations put forth by the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs.

I feel that supporting the deletion of the "sunset provision" in the existing Hawaii Mental Health Counselors License

Law (that will enable the Mental Health Counselors License Law to continue in Hawaii) will strengthen the quality of care by the mental health-care system in Hawaii.

Working with the children, adolescents and their families within the framework of the Department of Education, I

see the need for additional mental health professionals to address the needs of this population has been

acknowledged by the persons in the Hawaii Department of Health. Given the training that these counselors receive

in providing effective care to children and families, the continuation of the Hawaii Mental Health Counselors

Licensure law will enable these qualified professionals to address the needs of many children and families in Hawaii.

I am humbly submitting my testimony to ensure the quality and standard that these clients are entitled to as

they seek services from mental health providers. I also am in the process of supervising BHS IV's, within the DOE, who are striving to fulfill the requirements of the licensing board to achieve their Mental Health Counselor status.

I encourage you to pass HB 2566 out of the Committee of Health

Sincerely, Glenda Georgens

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HB 2566 RELATING TO PROFESSIONS

Committee on Health

Rep. Josh Green, M.D., Chair

Rep. John Mizuno, Vice Chair

Please Support This Bill

Passage of House Bill 2566 would enable mental health counselors in the State of Hawaii to continue to be licensed as part of our state's health-care system. The initial Mental Health Counselors Licensure Law that was passed several years ago began the process where these professionals could become licensed in the state. Since that time there has not only been no complaints about the services provided by these licensed professionals, but these individuals have assisted in addressing the growing need for mental health care in the State of Hawaii.

The following points are provided to further address the reason why it is important to support the passage of HB Bill 2566.

1. **Licensed Mental Health Counselors will strengthen the quality of care provided by the mental health-care system in Hawaii:** Recent court actions that focus on complaints that have been directed at the Hawaii State Department of Mental Health indicate that the state's mental health-care system is in need of additional qualified professionals to effectively meet the mental health needs of the people in Hawaii. Continuing the Hawaii Mental Health Counselors Licensure Law by having the existing "sunset provision" deleted will help ensure that additional mental health professionals that are available to support the mission of the Hawaii Department of Mental Health.
2. **Addressing the needs of children and adolescents:** The need for additional mental health professionals to address the needs of children and adolescents has been acknowledged by persons in the Hawaii Department of Health. Given the training mental health counselors receive in providing effective mental health-care to children and adolescents, the continuation of the Hawaii Mental Health Counselors Licensure law will enable these qualified professionals to address the needs of many children and adolescents in Hawaii.
3. **Meeting the needs of veterans in Hawaii:** Thousands of veterans are returning to Hawaii from the War in Iraq and occupation in Afghanistan experiencing a broad range of physical and mental health problems. This includes large numbers of veterans diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder that is adversely impacting their own lives as well as the lives of family members with whom they live. Continuing the Hawaii Mental Health Counselors Licensure Law will enable

qualified mental health counselors to join with other professionals to address the psychological needs of these veterans and their families.

4. **Cultural Competence:** One of the important considerations to address in considering the qualifications of mental health professionals is the level of cultural competence they have achieved in their professional training. The counselor training programs in Hawaii emphasize cultural competence throughout their curriculum. National surveys have indicated that the counselor training program at the University of Hawaii is rated in the top five programs in the United States in terms of promoting counselors' cultural competence. In short, the mental health counselors, who graduate from professional counseling programs in Hawaii, are well-prepared as culturally-competent mental health professionals.
5. **Addressing the "Ice epidemic":** The media continues to direct attention to the significant substance abuse (e.g., alcohol and drug abuse) problem in Hawaii in general and the negative affect of the "Ice epidemic" in particular. Licensed mental health counselors play an important role in providing the mental health counseling services that are essential in helping persons overcome their drug and alcohol problems across the state..
6. **Dealing with rising rates of violence in Hawaii:** Mental health counselors receive training in their graduate programs as well as in on-going professional development workshops that focus on ways in which they can effectively implement violence prevention interventions as well as working with the victims of violence in our community. The work these health-care professionals do in these areas are very important in light of the rising level of violence that is occurring in the State of Hawaii.
7. **Addressing the needs of the growing number of homeless adults and children in Hawaii:** Mental health counselors are trained to provide services that address the psycho-social needs of the growing number of homeless persons in Hawaii. The counseling department in the University of Hawaii has a faculty member whose research, writings, teachings, and interventions for homeless persons is recognized nationally for their efficacy in this area. The resources generated from this faculty member and other members of the faculty in different training programs in Hawaii assist in developing counselors whose professional competencies include the knowledge and skills that are necessary to work effectively with homeless persons.
8. **Supporting the mental health of persons in rural areas in Hawaii:** The Mental Health-Care system in Hawaii continues to lack the resources that are necessary to provide high quality mental health-care services that are affordable and easily accessible to persons in rural parts of Hawaii. Supporting the continuation of the Hawaii Mental Health Counselors Licensure Law would enable a qualified resource pool of mental health professionals to help address the problems that many persons living in rural parts of the state routinely experience in their lives.

9. **Complementing the work of psychiatrists who prescribe medications to clients:** It is commonly known that, while many psychiatrists work hard to address the medical needs of their clients by assessing the need for and prescribing medication for their clients, these mental health professionals do not direct as much time implementing more time-consuming therapies. Many consumers in Hawaii recognize this situation and seek out the assistance of mental health counselors who are trained in providing the more time consuming therapies that are necessary in promoting effective psychological outcomes. By continuing the Hawaii Mental Health Counselors Licensure Law, the people in this state will have the opportunity to secure the services of professionals who can help provide a more comprehensive approach to mental health-care.

10. **Addressing the needs of persons on the neighbor islands:** Many persons on the neighbor islands complain that they are often overlooked when it comes to allocation of different health-care services to address their needs. This includes the articulation of concerns about the limited health-care resources available on the neighbor islands. Recognizing that many licensed mental health counselors in Hawaii are working on the neighbor islands, continuing the current Mental Health Counselors Licensure Law in the state would help address the needs of many persons would seek the services of these qualified professionals.

11. **Guaranteeing the continued quality of mental health-care in Hawaii:** One of the important functions the Hawaii Mental Health Counselors Licensure Law serves is to guarantee that high quality mental health-care services are provided to the people in this state by professionals who meet the established criteria for licensure. The deletion of the existing "sunset provision" in the current law would enable qualified mental health counselors to become licensed and ensure that high quality mental health-care services will continue to be offered to the people of Hawaii by these professionals.

For all of these reasons I seek your support in ensuring the passage of HB 2566 Relating to Professions.

Dr. Michael D'Andrea
President of the Hawaii Counselors Association
And
Professor in the
Department of Counselor Education
At the University of Hawaii