

**TESTIMONY OF MARION M. HIGA, STATE AUDITOR,
ON SENATE BILL NO. 2159, RELATING TO PROFESSIONS**

Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing

February 22, 2008

Chair Kokubun and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill No. 2159. This bill repeals the sunset provision for the licensing program for mental health counselors created in 2004 by the Legislature under Act 209.

Currently, the office has engaged a consultant to conduct a sunset analysis of the mental health counselors licensing program as required under Section 26H-4(b), Hawai'i Revised Statutes. One of the criteria for our sunset analysis is whether the licensing program provides a benefit to consumers. Until the sunset report is submitted to the Legislature this session, the proposal may be premature. However, if we conclude that licensing mental health counselors has its benefits in protecting consumers, then the proposal will be needed.

This bill ought to be considered further by the Legislature, but we ask that a defective date be put into section 3, before allowing it to move forward. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.



LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR

JAMES R. AIONA, JR.
LT. GOVERNOR

STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS
335 MERCHANT STREET, ROOM 310
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HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809
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LAWRENCE M. REIFURTH
DIRECTOR

RONALD BOYER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

**PRESENTATION OF THE
PROFESSIONAL AND VOCATIONAL LICENSING DIVISION**

TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE, CONSUMER PROTECTION, AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

TWENTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE
Regular Session of 2008

Monday, February 22, 2008
9:00 a.m.

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL NO. 2159, RELATING TO PROFESSIONS.

TO THE HONORABLE RUSSELL S. KOKUBUN, CHAIR,
AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

My name is Celia Suzuki, testifying on behalf of the Professional and Vocational Licensing Division of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs ("Department"). The Department appreciates the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 2159, Relating to Professions. The Department believes that the action proposed in this bill may be premature and therefore recommends an amendment to keep the bill moving for further discussion.

Senate Bill No. 2159 proposes to repeal the sunset date of December 31, 2008 for Chapter 453D, Hawaii Revised Statutes ("HRS"), relating to mental health counselors.

The Department is aware that the Office of the Auditor is currently conducting the sunset review of Chapter 453D, HRS, and intends to furnish the report to the Legislature this legislative session. Any definitive position on retaining or repealing Chapter 453D should be made **after** the sunset report and the Auditor's recommendations are presented. Thus, the Committee may wish to amend the bill to insert a defective date, allowing it to move forward while awaiting the Auditor's report.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on Senate Bill No. 2159.

Testimony of
Phyllis Dendle
Director of Government Affairs

Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Affordable Housing
The Honorable Russell S. Kokubun, Chair
The Honorable David Y. Ige, Vice Chair

February 22, 2008
9:00 am
Conference Room 229

SB2159 RELATING TO PROFESSIONS

Chair Kokubun and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on SB 2159 which makes permanent the protection of the title and practice of professional mental health counselors.

Kaiser Permanente supports this bill.

Hawaii was one of only three states that did not license professional counselors. While national certification has been available, it did not provide the same benefits or protections to the public as state licensure. These masters level mental health clinicians bring valuable skills to the community. Licensing them assures professionalism and the protection of consumers.


We urge you to make permanent this protection. Thank you for your consideration on this matter.



**Mental Health Services Research,
Evaluation, and Training Program**
University of Hawai'i

DATE: February 22, 2008

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair, The Honorable Senator, David Ige Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing

FROM: Deborah Arendale, MC, LMHC, CSAC 
Geriatric Mental Health Specialist, UH-MHSRET
121 Mahalani St., Wailuku, HI 96793
244-9404; 268-4451 (cell); 244-9406 (fax)

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

I am testifying in strong support of SB 2159.

- I am currently employed as a Geriatric Mental Health Specialist by the University of Hawaii, Mental Health Services Research, Evaluation, and Training Program and have the privilege of piloting a program for the State in Geriatric Mental Health. I work closely with the Adult Mental Health Division under a Targeted Capacity Expansion grant from SAMHSA to provide direct therapy to SPMI consumers over the age of 60.
- Although I'm certain that others are working with elders, as this is a Pilot Program I am currently the only provider in the State providing such a service in conjunction with the AMHD and various community agencies serving our elders.
- Reimbursable Licensure is particularly important for me because I cannot provide assessment services to the elders without the standing as a "Qualified Mental Health Professional."
- Currently, the Maui Community Mental Health Center does not have a QMHP employed. QMHP's (according to the currently limited definitions) are very difficult to locate in the neighbor islands.
- This lack of available personnel necessitates that all elderly consumers must go to the MCMHC to receive eligibility assessment services. Although some are able to travel to the Center, many are not able and remain an untreated population.
- Due to my ability to conduct home and/or community visits at times that best suit the needs of the elderly, acknowledgement of the LMHC credential would certainly serve the needs of elders that are currently untreated.
- With the advent of the "Silver Tsunami" heading our way, the need to maximize resources, especially in the neighbor islands, will help ensure that our aging population will receive the services they deserve.

I encourage you to pass SB 2159 out of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing.

A collaborative project with the Hawai'i State Department of Health's Adult Mental Health Division



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAI'I

Na 'Ohana Pūlama Program
214 Waianuenue Ave., #209, Hilo, Hawai'i 96720-2489
(808) 935-5238 – phone (808) 935-0357 - fax

DATE: February 22, 2008

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair, The Honorable Senator, David Ige Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing

FROM: Melisa Secola, Ph.D., LMHC, NCC
Program Director, Catholic Charities Hawai'i, Nā 'Ohana Pūlama – Hilo

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of SB 2159. I have been a professional counselor for 28 years and am currently working as a director of a therapeutic foster care program and as a part-time university instructor. My testimony reflects the needs of our state's growing population of foster youth with severe emotional and behavioral challenges as well as the voices of my students who are completing undergraduate degrees in psychology. These students are poised to pursue advanced degrees in the helping professions, and their career decisions are heavily influenced by the licensure and employment opportunities available within our state.

Licensure promotes professionalism within the field and benefits both those seeking mental health services and those who provide them. The Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC) possesses a broad skill set and can work in a variety of education and social service venues. LMHCs work as direct service providers, administrators, advocates, educators and/or consultants in settings that include private practices, community agencies, schools, universities, employee assistance programs, and substance abuse treatment centers to name a few. An abundance of qualified helping professionals allows more consumer choice, and thus the potential for greater client satisfaction and better outcomes.

Therefore it is vitally important for the legislature to uphold progress in assuring that high quality mental health services are available to individuals and families throughout the state. Ultimately, licensure sustains our systems of care—currently, students can pursue graduate degrees in counseling psychology at two locations within the state university system (Hilo and Honolulu). With licensure, employers at community agencies are more likely to find the helping professionals that meet the credentialing requirements of their state contracts. This assures that their employees have met rigorous education and practice standards.

Again, thank you for accepting this testimony. I encourage you to pass SB 2159 out of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing.



***Ka Maui Ola – The Power Of Healing Therapeutic Svcs.
A Culturally Based Practice Specializing In Women's Issues, Family
Systems, Adolescent Concerns & Substance/Alcohol Abuse***

DATE: February 22, 2008

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair, The Honorable Senator,
David Ige Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee on Commerce,
Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing

FROM: **Joddy Manuwai, LMHC, NCC**
(808) 222 – 0093
KaMauiOla@gmail.com

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

I am testifying in strong support of SB 2159.

Aloha `Oukou

The recent events our island has witnessed – the beating death of the woman in Kailua, a mother of five, coupled with the senseless death of baby Cyrus – has given awareness to the people of this state that strengthening the quality of care providers by the mental health care system is a given and an issue that must be addressed. Recent court actions targeting the Hawaii State Department of Mental Health bring an awareness of the need for additional qualified providers to join in effectively meeting the mental health needs in our beautiful state.

The ongoing need for additional mental health providers to address the needs of children and adolescents have been acknowledged by the Department of Health. Currently, the DOH provides intensive in – home services for youth who meet a specific level of criteria. The suggested time period of this path is usually six months and upon discharge, its up to the parent or guardian to continue services through the youth's private insurance. At times this may be difficult; many behavioral health specialists are either over – booked or not accepting new patients. In many cases, the type of private insurance they have makes a difference; many of these youth are Quest plan clients.

In June of 2007, after meeting the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs mandates, I was licensed as a Mental Health Counselor. The following month, when Lingle failed to veto our licensure bill, the door remained open. Although this move by Lingle didn't ensure vendorship, many insurance companies – Aloha Care, TriCare, HMAA, UHA/Summerlin – accepted us as

providers. What this did for me personally was open the door to work with the population I am so invested in – my people, the Hawaiian people.

Knowing the importance of supporting the mental health of persons in rural areas, my work began and has continued to revolve around the Leeward Coast. The ongoing goal continues to be providing high quality mental health services that are affordable and easily accessible. Although the lack of resources in the Mental Health Care system [in Hawai`i] continues to make meeting this goal difficult, supporting the continuation of the *Hawai`i Mental Health Counselors Licensure Law* would at minimum enable a qualified resource pool of mental health providers to continue assisting this population that is plagued with homelessness, domestic violence and most prevalent, the alcohol and substance use/abuse. It goes without saying that the ice epidemic here is rampant!

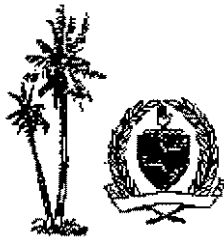
Continuing the *Hawai`i Mental Health Counselors Licensure Law* by having the existing “sunset provision” deleted will be your way of helping to ensure that additional providers who are as qualified as the licensures the Department of Health currently recognizes – Ph.D., Psy.D. LCSW, and most recently, LMFT – are available to continue supporting the mission of the Hawaii Department of Mental Health.

This being said, I thank you for your time and encourage you, the individuals who have the authority and the ability, to pass **HB 2566** out of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing.

Malama pono,

Joddy Manuwai, LMHC, NCC*

HAWAII REHABILITATION COUNSELING ASSOCIATION
P O BOX 4385
HONOLULU, HI 96812



DATE: February 22, 2008

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair,
The Honorable Senator, David Ige Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee
on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing

FROM: Betty Sestak, MS, LMHC, CRC, NCC
Legislative Chair, Hawaii Rehabilitation Counseling Assoc.

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

I am testifying in strong support of SB 2159.

The Hawaii Rehabilitation counseling Association represents 50 practicing vocational rehabilitation counselors in the state of Hawaii. Hawaii Rehabilitation Counseling Association has been an active professional association representing the professional needs of Hawaii rehabilitation counselors for more than 30 years.

Licensure is important to assure the public that mental health providers in Hawaii are competent to provide qualified and ethical services. Licensure provides consistent and accountable standards of practice. It further provides for recourse of the client when they are harmed in some way by a provider who is unethical or incompetent.

Hawaii Rehabilitation Counseling Association is in favor of SB2159 and strongly supports its passage. I encourage you to pass SB 2159 out of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and to support this bill.

Betty Sestak, Legislative Chair
391-9390



1181 Mapuana St.
Kailua, HI 96734
(808) 391-9390

DATE: February 22, 2008

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair,
The Honorable Senator, David Ige, Vice – Chair
Members of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing

FROM: Betty Sestak, MS, LMHC, CRC, NCC

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

I am testifying in strong support of SB 2159.

I am a rehabilitation counselor who has been in practice in Hawaii since 1976 and am in strong support of licensure for all master and doctoral level counselors in the mental health field. I am gratified that Hawaii State has recognized this and passed the mental health counselor licensure law. Licensure is important to assure the public that mental health providers in Hawaii are competent to provide qualified and ethical services. Licensure provides consistent and accountable standards of practice. It further provides for recourse of the client when they are harmed in some way by a provider who is unethical or incompetent. This licensure bill has also increased the pool of badly needed providers of mental health services in this state.

I am in favor of SB 2159 and strongly support its passage. I encourage you to pass SB 2159 out of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and to support this bill.

Betty Sestak, MS, LMHC, CRC, NCC, CCM
Rehabilitation Counselor

ALLIANCE FOR PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR LICENSURE
(Hawai'i Rehabilitation Counseling Association & Hawai'i Counselors Association)
1181 Mapuana Street, Kailua, Hawaii, 96734

DATE: February 22, 2008

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun Chair, the Honorable Senator David Ige Vice- Chair, and Members of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing

FROM: Sandra Joy Eastlack, MSCP, LHMC, NCC

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

I am testifying in strong support of SB 2159.

The Alliance for Professional Counselor Licensure supports the 178 mental health counselors who have obtained licensure since July 1, 2005; an estimated 100 to 150 counselors currently working on obtaining their licensure status and those working towards their master's degree in counseling. Most importantly we support the consumers of mental health services.

Licensure for mental health counselors ensures the consumer that they are working with a counselor who has demonstrated a standard of expertise through training, experience and examination as well as following stringent ethical guidelines.

There are not a lot of positions that are labeled mental health counselor and mental health counselors in private practice usually do not call themselves that due to the stigma of the title. Few people want to acknowledge they have a mental health issue. However, mental health counselors work in a great variety of settings that includes and is not limited to independent practice, community agencies, managed behavioral health care systems, employee assistance programs, substance abuse treatment centers and schools.

Mental health counselors fulfill a much needed service. The November 29, 2007 edition of the Honolulu Advertiser had an article about depression and the Mental Health Association of Hawaii provided several suggestions one of which was to improve the availability of mental health professionals.

Hawai'i is excellent at providing Med QUEST insurance to those who are low income and can not otherwise afford medical insurance. However, the requirements under Hawaii's Med QUEST program require licensed professionals. Chapter 2.2 of the Medicaid Provider Manual states "An individual provider must be licensed to practice within the scope of his/her profession in accordance with State law." If licensure does not continue for mental health counselors they would not be able to provide services to a substantial portion of the population that includes some of the neediest of these services.

The statistics I have been able to obtain is that the estimated population of Hawai'i on July 1, 2006 was 1,285,408 and QUEST enrollment as of December 2007 was 201,278. Statewide this is close to 16% of Hawai'i's population. That is substantial as there are numerous studies showing that the indirect costs of lost wages, criminal activities and homelessness are some of the causes of not treating mental illnesses. Those that have Med QUEST often have a difficult time obtaining services as mental health practitioners often limit the number of Med QUEST clients they are willing to serve, due to the lower reimbursement. It is well known that services are even more severely limited in rural areas and that includes all of the state except urban Honolulu.

An other issue that I wish to address is what would happen in a natural disaster. Hawai'i is somewhat isolated and after a natural disaster the first need is naturally that of survival however, shortly thereafter mental health needs will arise and people trained with crisis counseling skills are important. The American Red Cross offers Disaster Training in mental health issues for mental health professionals. However, in order to be trained the professionals must be licensed in the state they live in. I can not help to ask would it not be to Hawai'i's advantage to have local residents working with their own people?

With all due respect to the Office of the Auditor and the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs we disagree with amending of the bill to an effective date to allow for the Auditor's report. It is completely possible that the Auditor's report will not be completed before the end of this legislative session and then there would be no repeal of the sunset date.

HRS Chapter 26-H -5 clearly states that "The legislative auditor shall evaluate each board, commission, and regulatory program subject to repeal by section 26H-4 and submit an evaluation report to the legislature prior to the convening of the regular session of the year of the repeal date." This did not happen and how can the public be sanctioned for a law that a government agency did not follow?

To our knowledge, the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs does not have any issues with the law as it is now written. If they do it has not been communicated to mental health counselors. There were some issues in 2006 and 2007 and we came into the legislature to make the needed changes at that time. We believe that if there are changes recommended to the law that can be handled in the next session as there would be very limited time to make changes by the time the report is presented, if it is before the end of session.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide a few, of many reasons, the sunset provision of mental health counselors in HRS 26-H should be repealed.

I encourage you to pass SB 2159, out of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing.

for hearing on Friday
FEB 20 2008

ALLIANCE FOR PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR LICENSURE
(Hawai'i Rehabilitation Counseling Association & Hawai'i Counselors Association)
1181 Mapuana Street, Kailua, Hawaii, 96734

February 20, 2008

The Honorable Senator Kokubun
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 407
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Senator Kokubun:

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Thank you for you and your staff consideration in scheduling SB 2159 in advance, so that if people from other islands and specifically the island of Hawaii can attend they have the time to make reservations and adjust there schedule as it is almost an all day endeavor to attend a committee hearing for those that live on other islands. I do not know if anyone will be able to attend, however I know that your consideration is appreciated by everyone.

In the last hearing, on the Senate Committee on Health, when asked, DCCA stated that they expected the auditors to be out before the end of March. Should that really happen it will provide limited time if they recommend changes that need to be made by law to improve the bill. We are asking that should this be the case, the sunset be repealed and those issues can be addressed next year as the time frame will be extremely short and the best decisions may not be made.

When I met with you in early January I said we would have more information and finally, some of it is together. We are attaching some information on the issue as well as a chart that shows the differences between the other licensed master level disciplines. The chart (from the HRS requirements) shows that mental health counselors are at least as equally qualified as the others as our courses emphasis is on counseling issues.

We believe continuing licensure is important to offer more opportunities to the residents of Hawaii and especially those living in the rural areas. There are currently 178 LHMCs that are licensed and DCCA s geographical report (that shows 177 LHMCs) shows 26 counselors on the Island of Hawaii. LHMCs provide more reasonable costs than psychologists and are well trained in the area of counseling. With the massive need for substance abuse counselors and the issue of dual diagnosis LHMCs are needed to assist solving this problem.

Prior testimony on this bill has indicated that there is a need that is not being filled and to eliminate licensure for Mental Health Counselors will only increase that need. Statewide, it appears that the need is there however, it appears to be critical on the Island of Hawaii and therefore, we would think it would be important for you to support the repeal of the sunset provision.

We re also asking that the Senate bill be changed to reflect the House bill. While Senator Baker, drafted the Senate bill and sent it to the House it was presented differently there. Unless there is a legal reason that the House bill is not okay, for us the bottom line is to repeal the sunset provision and it appears the House bill will do that.

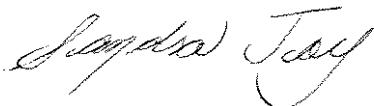
I will not be asking for this in my testimony however, we would be fine with it being changed to the House bill as that would be one less issue to deal with. DCCA is asking for a defective date as the sunset report has not been issued, Both Health committees passed the bill as it is however, I have concerns about what may happen in the House Consumer Protection and Commerce committee. Therefore, we do not need technicalities jamming us up. I am enclosing the body of the draft of each bill.

I thank you for your continuing support of this effort.

I am also forwarding a copy of this letter to Senator David Ige as he is your Vice- Chair and Chair of the Committee on Health.

If you have any questions, you may call me at my work number 587-4362 or at my home number (answer machine, if I am not available) 521-7335.

Sincerely,



Sandra Joy Eastlack MSCP, LMHC, NCC
Co-chair of the Alliance for Professional Counselor Licensure

Cc: Senator David Ige

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO PROFESSIONS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

SECTION 1. Section 26H-4, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is repealed.

"§26H-4 Repeal dates for newly enacted professional and vocational regulatory programs.

~~(a)~~ Any professional or vocational regulatory program enacted after January 1, 1994, and listed in this section shall be repealed on December 31, 2008. The auditor shall perform an evaluation of the program, pursuant to section 26H-5, prior to its repeal date.

~~[(b) Chapter 453D (mental health counselors) shall be repealed on December 31, 2008.]~~

SECTION 2. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed and stricken.

SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO PROFESSIONS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

SECTION 1. The purpose of this Act is to repeal the law that provides for the periodic repeal of newly enacted professional and vocational regulatory programs.

SECTION 2. Section 26H-4, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is repealed.

~~["§26H-4 Repeal dates for newly enacted professional and vocational regulatory programs:~~

~~(a) Any professional or vocational regulatory program enacted after January 1, 1994, and listed in this section shall be repealed on December 31, 2008. The auditor shall perform an evaluation of the program, pursuant to section 26H-5, prior to its repeal date.~~

~~(b) Chapter 453D (mental health counselors) shall be repealed on December 31, 2008."]~~

SECTION 3. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed and stricken.

SECTION 4. THIS ACT SHALL TAKE EFFECT UPON ITS APPROVAL

**QUICK FACTS ON MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELORS
LICENSED UNDER HRS §453D**

Mental Health Counselor licensure is scheduled for sunset under HRS § 26H (4), December 31, 2008.

There are therefore, bills in this session to repeal the sunset. The bills are:
HB 2566, and
SB 2159

Both bills have passed through their respective Health Committees and the committee reports support the continued need for licensure of Mental Health Counselors.

HRS §26H-4 provides for the auditor to evaluate the program to assess whether it complies with the established policies under HRS 26-H-2 and if public interest requires the law. It also states that the report shall be delivered to the legislature prior to the convening of the regular session of the year of the repeal date.

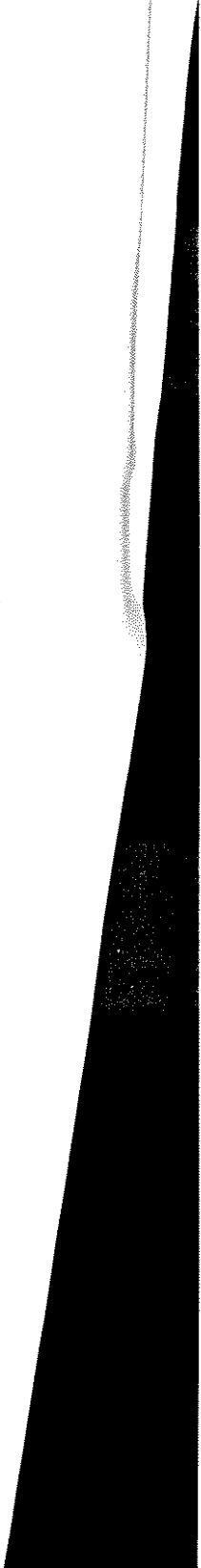
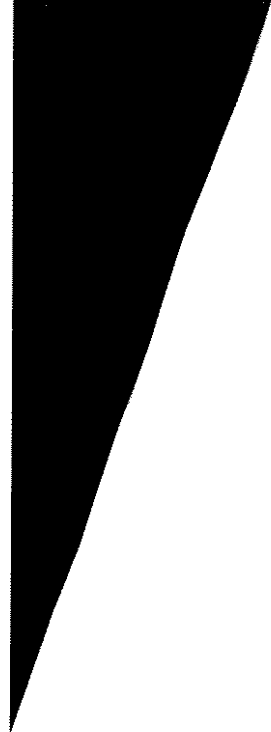
The auditor's report has not been submitted and is currently being worked on. At the last committee hearing DCCA said they expected the report to be out by the end of March. This may not occur as for the sunrise report that was to be submitted prior to the 1999 session; it did not come out until August of 1999. Even, if the report were to be presented that would not leave enough time to make any changes to the law that may be recommended.

It is expected that the legislative auditor will say there is no need for licensure as there have not been reports from the public of harm from licensed counselors. This was that was also the case with Social Workers and Marriage & Family Therapists. However, the legislature repealed the sunset clause anyway.

Unfortunately, the legislative auditor looks at the lack of reports backwards. Rather than making sure the public is protected, it only considered complaint reports in the past as that would be cause when someone (or ones) is harmed then maybe there would be a reason for licensure. It happens in so many areas that bad things need to happen to get attention. However, is it not time that Hawai'i becomes proactive and provides assurances before something happens to someone?

It may be looked at that DCCA is licensing the right people who have the expertise and the ethical standards to do their job. In this way licensure protects the public.

Mental Health Counselors were licensed effective July 1, 2005. Marriage & Family Therapists, December 31, 2000 and Social Workers, July 1, 2004.



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**2008 COMPARISON OF LICENSED MASTER'S LEVEL DISCIPLINES
PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

Information is from the Hawaii Revised Statutes, with a couple of exceptions that are *

DISCIPLINE	MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELOR	MARRIAGE & FAMILY THERAPIST	CLINICAL SOCIAL WORKER
HRS	Chapter §453D	Chapter §451J	Chapter §467E
EDUCATION and REQUIRED COURSEWORK	<p>Master's or Doctoral Degree from an accredited educational institution in counseling or an allied field related to the practice of mental health counseling that includes or is supplemented by a minimum of 48 semester hours or 72 quarter hours in the following course area with a minimum of 3 semester hours or 5 quarter hours in each course⁴ area as indicated below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Human Growth and Development - Social and Cultural Foundations - Counseling Theories and Applications - Group Theory and Practice - Career and Lifestyle Development - Appraisal of Human Behavior - Tests and Measurements - Research and Program Evaluation - Professional Orientation and Ethics 	<p>Master's or Doctoral Degree from an accredited educational institution in marriage and family therapy or an allied field related to the practice of mental health counseling which includes or is supplemented by graduate level course work comprising a minimum of 33 semester, or 45 quarter hours in the following course areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 9 semester or 12 quarter hours in marriage and family studies - 9 semester or 12 quarter hours in marriage and family therapy studies - 9 semester or 12 quarter hours in human development - 3 semester hours or 4 quarter hours in ethical and professional studies - 3 semester or four quarter hours in Research 	<p>Masters degree from a college or university in a social work program accredited by or deemed to be equivalent to an accredited program by the Council on Social Work Education or a doctoral degree from a doctoral degree program in social work accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges or a comparable regional accreditation body and has passed the intermediate or higher level nation examination given by the Association of Social Work boards</p> <p>No required courses are listed in the law.</p>

DISCIPLINE	MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELOR	MARRIAGE & FAMILY THERAPIST	CLINICAL SOCIAL WORKER
EXAMINATION	Passed the National Counselor Examination for Licensure and Certification in compliance with the standards of the National Board of Certified Counselors.	Passed the National Marriage and Therapy Exam.	Passed the clinical level national examination given by the Association of Social Work Boards
OTHER	An applicant who graduated prior to June 30, 2007, DCCA will also deem acceptable written certifications from the institute attesting to the requirements and for post-graduate experience written certification regarding the hours, timeframe and type of experience. [HRS §453D-7(3)]	An individual who is a clinical member of the association shall have been deemed to meet the educational and experience requirements.	An applicant who submits evidence of certification as a qualified clinical social worker or diplomate in clinical social work by the National Association of Social Workers or as a board certified diplomate by the American Board of Examiners shall be deemed to have satisfied the requirements for a Clinical Social Worker.

testimony

From: Dorothy Bach [dbach@chaminade.edu]
Sent: Thursday, February 21, 2008 1:47 PM
To: testimony
Subject: Fw: SB 2159 in Committe on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing

----- Original Message -----

From: Dorothy Bach
To: testimony@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Thursday, February 21, 2008 11:30 AM
Subject: SB 2159 in Committe on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing

**Chaminade University
 3140 Waialae Ave.
 Honolulu, Hawaii 96816**

DATE: February 22, 2008

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair, The Honorable Senator, David Ige Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing

FROM: Dorothy Bach MSCP, LMHC
 Practicum/Internship Director
 Community Counseling and Marriage & Family Counseling
dbach@chaminade.edu
 Phone 739-8557

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

I am testifying in strong support of SB 2159. This law, SB 2159, has allowed more individuals to receive quality care/treatment in a timely manner. With National Guard soldiers directed overseas and various military deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, repealing the "sunset clause" in SB 2159, would allow the state to ensure quality care for individuals seeking counseling. Continuity of training and licensure provide a level of therapy and counseling to more families and individuals in need.

Continuing counseling and therapeutic care for several underserved populations would increase the productivity of current counselors and therapists. Licensed counselors and therapists would work to meet the needs of these populations; adolescents, special needs children and their families. With a continuing licensure in the Mental Health field continuity of care will be ensured for the children and adults of Hawaii.

Repealing the sunset clause allows the state to ensure mental health care meets specific requirements and standards for the health and well-being of its constituents.

I encourage you to pass SB 2159 out of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection

2/21/2008

and Affordable Housing.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Bach

Teresa Guidry-Shigemasa, LMHC, Registered Play Therapist-Supervisor
Sunset Beach Elementary School
59-360 Kamehameha Highway
Haleiwa, HI 96791

DATE: February 22, 2008
TIME: 9:00 am
ROOM: 229

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair, The Honorable Senator,
David Ige Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee on Commerce,
Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing

FROM: Teresa Guidry-Shigemasa, LMHC, RPT/S
Contact email: Teresa_Guidry-Shigemasa@notes.k12.hi.us

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

I am testifying in strong support of SB 2159.

I deliver counseling services to the children and families of Sunset Beach Elementary. Many of the consumers I service feel protected and realize that they would have a forum in which to seek grievance, if necessary, due to the fact that I am a licensed provider.

I encourage you to pass SB 2159 out of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing.

Respectfully,

Teresa Guidry-Shigemasa

DATE: February 22, 2008

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair, The Honorable Senator,
David Ige Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee on Commerce,
Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing

From: Rosemary Lum de Costa, LMHC, NCC, MSCP, BHS

Re: HB 2566, Relating to Professions
Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Aloha

I am testifying in strong support of SB 2159.
School Based Behavioral Health Salt Lake Elementary School

My name is Rosemary Lum de Costa. I was born in Honolulu, on the Island of Oahu. I want to thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2566.

The benefit of licensure to the public can be examined in the access of Mental Health Care Services across socio-economic and geographic lines. In the State of Hawaii, the public's access to mental health care services is severely limited within Medicare, Medicaid, and Quest Guidelines. Since "licensed" providers are recognized by Medicare, Medicaid, and Quest and "certified" providers are not, it is essential to the public, especially those with limited means that Mental Health Counselors be licensed.

The importance of access to mental health treatment is best understood through what happens if the public does not have access to Mental Health Services. Work productivity goes down, more people are homeless or in jail, health outcomes with people with heart disease, chronic pain, cancer, etc. go down and the need for medical care including hospitalization goes up (from information developed by the Coalition for Insurance Party, Jan.12,2000).

Rural communities in the State of Hawaii have always and continue to suffer disproportionately from a shortage of health care services, especially in the mental health profession. In 2002, the National Mental Health Information Center reported an estimated 148, 947 individuals use in the State Of Hawaii between the ages of 9-17, had serious emotional disturbances and the numbers only continue to increase because of the shortage of affordable health care services in our rural communities and in our urban communities as well. This alarming number also does not include those uses that are homeless or institutionalized.

The National Mental Health Information Center also reported in 2002, an estimated 949, 384 adults, 18 years and older, in the State of Hawaii had serious mental illness. This alarming number also does not include adults who are homeless or institutionalized.

Population growth along with persons with mental health problems and co-occurring disorders would be disastrous for the State of Hawaii if left untreated. According to the 2005-2006 U.S. Census Bureau in the State of Hawaii, Honolulu City and County grew at least 6%. Please note

that these statistics are lower than actual because these are only known reported cases. Over the past several years, health care services in the rural communities still remain to be minimal. The State of Hawaii has spent millions of dollars to battle the crystal meth “ice” epidemic, however, they fail to recognize the importance of mental health services that were simultaneously needed fight this battle. A person who has both alcohol or drug problems and an emotional/psychiatric problem is said to have a co-occurring disorder. To recover fully, the person needs treatment for both problems. Recent studies show that over half of the adults with co-occurring disorders received no treatment for either disorder. The results from the 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health are as follows: treatment for both mental health and substance use problems 8.5%, substance use treatment only 4.1%, treatment only for mental health problems 34.3%, no treatment 53%; based on 5.2 million adults with co-occurring serious psychological distress and substance use disorder. The 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health goes on to say that an estimated 24.6 million American adults, over age 18, reported to have experiences “serious psychological distress” during the preceding year. More than an estimated 30 million adults reported experiencing at least one episode of Major Depression during their lives.

Researchers gathered the information by administering the K6 instrument to respondents as part of the larger survey. The scale consists of six questions about symptoms of emotional distress experienced by respondents during one month in the prior year at a time when they were feeling their worst emotionally.

The six items ask about feelings of depression, anxiety, restlessness, and hopelessness and were scored on the basis of the frequency. The scale ranges from 0-24 points and respondents with 13 or higher were classified as experiences serious psychological distress.

Women reported more psychological distress than did men. Additionally, in 2005, adults who used illicit drugs in the previous year were significantly more likely to report serious psychological distress than those who did not use an illicit drug.

Studies show that in order for our rural and urban communities to receive the necessary mental health services we need to reduce professional competition. A study entitled: STATE LICENSURE LAWS AND THE MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE RURAL MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE was completed in October 2002 by the Maine Rural Health Research Center, whose mission is to inform health care policymaking and the delivery of rural health service through high quality, policy relevant research, policy analysis and technical assistance on rural health issues of regional and national significance. As indicated in their findings, evidence of the “guild environment” existed in current licensure laws. Licensed professions continue to seek limitations on the scopes of practice for other professions to protect their professional niche. When a profession seeks to secure exclusive rights to a specific practice, they must argue that other professions are not qualified in this area – an argument based on quality, often expressed as years of education. A profession may set extensive requirements for entry into the profession, such as many hours of supervised, or that a certain number of hours of supervision must be face-to-face, further establishes an explicit “gateway” into the profession, similar to an apprenticeship in a traditional guild. These strategies are rational means of protecting the market for a profession’s services in an environment where there are ample members of multiple professions competing for market share. Please DO NOT allow this type of competition to fester in the State of Hawaii. Stand strong and protect our people and provide them with the necessary health care services that are desperately needed and long overdue.

Allow our Licensed Mental Health Counselors to continue the excellent work that they have been providing for the past several years. Do not strip our communities of this benefit.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my testimony and I encourage all of you to support our rural and urban communities and its mental health care needs by passing House Bill 2566 out of the Committee on Health.

-

I encourage you to pass SB 2159 out of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing.

Rosemary Lum de Costa, LMHC, NCC, MSCP, BHS
SBBH Salt Lake Elementary School

98-1461 #4 Kamahao Street
Pearl City, HI 96782

February 21, 2008

The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair
The Honorable Senator David Ige, Vice-Chair
Members of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection
and Affordable Housing

Dear Senators Kokubun and Ige and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

I am testifying in strong support of S.B. 2159 Relating to Professions.

Consumer protection laws give legal teeth to protect citizens. Sadly, in today's world we can never assume that "professional people" will conduct themselves according to their profession's Code of Ethics. Mental health counselors deal with a vulnerable population who are oftentimes incapable of making good decisions on their own behalf. Such vulnerability requires that consumers have regulatory recourse should they be harmed.

I strongly encourage you to pass S.B. 2159 out of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing.

Sincerely,

Diane S. Sakumoto, M.Ed.

Certified Rehabilitation Counselor
Past President of Rehabilitation Association of Hawaii
Past President of Hawaii Rehabilitation Counseling Association

DATE: February 22, 2008

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair, The Honorable Senator, David Ige Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing

FROM: **Sue Stone, MA, LMHC, CSAC**
75 Mano Drive
Kula, Hawai'i 96790
Home: 808/264-26230
Work: 808984-2150
Email: sue.stone@doh.hawaii.gov

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

I am testifying in strong support of SB 2159.

Reasons:

1) Professionally, the outer islands are in need of licensed professionals to fill positions and responsibilities that require licensure. **The outer islands have great shortage of qualified mental health professionals.**

2) Professionally, I work for the State of Hawai'i Department of Health. Our licensed social worker just retired. Her responsibilities require a licensed professional to determine eligibility for adult mental health services. **Because of Maui's lack of these credentials, our waiting list to determine eligibility is quite long at this time; therefore, appropriate services for eligible citizens are delayed.**

3) **This licensure is important in order to provide adequate oversight in the areas of ethics and professional responsibilities.** Those of us who have worked hard and long to obtain this license, actively practicing and maintaining ethical principles and continuing education, often feel helpless and demoralized by those who advertise and indeed, offer services to the vulnerable public without this oversight, and are engaged in practices which are at least questionable, if not outright violations of ethics and best practices to protect persons served.

I encourage you to pass SB 2159 out of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing.

Sincerely,

Sue Stone, MA, LMHC, CSAC

Trina Nahm-Mijo, Ph.D., LMHC
P.O. Box 304
Kurtistown, HI 96760

DATE: February 22, 2008

**Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and
Affordable Housing**

Friday, 2/22 at 9:00 a.m., Rm. 229

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair
The Honorable Senator, David Ige Vice – Chair
Members of the Committee

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of SB 2159. I have been a Professor of Psychology, Dance and Women's Studies at Hawai'i Community College, but I also went into part-time private practice in 1993, especially to work with children. At that time, the Department of Education was under the Felix Consent Decree as a result of a lawsuit for not adequately meeting the mental health needs of children. I became a provider for some of these children as well as a therapist with the foster program Casey Family Program. Most of my clientele at that time were either young girls who had been sexually abused or youth in foster care because their biological parents' rights had been taken away due to neglect, usually due to drug addiction.

At this time, I became acutely aware of the shortage of mental health practitioners on this island as compared to the vast need for mental health services. Because the Big Island has the ignominious distinction of having the worst social indicators in the state—domestic violence, suicide, mental illness, drug abuse, and early pregnancy—it is of utmost importance that Chapter 453D of HRS which allows for the licensing of mental health counselors does not sunset on December 31, 2008 and that Section 26H-4 of the Hawai'i Revised Statutes is repealed.

I received my Mental Health licensure in 2005 which allows me to provide mental health services so badly needed in our rural communities. Because I had devoted my career to solely teaching for the first fifteen years after receiving my Ph.D. rather than going into clinical practice, it was difficult for me to seek licensing as a psychologist later in my career. Although, my degree is in Counseling Psychology from UC, Berkeley, my program was interdisciplinary and based on a lot of independent study coursework. This made it difficult for me to meet the specific course requirements required to be licensed as a psychologist. I know some very fine clinicians with Ph.D.s in a similar situation. Thus, the certification for LMHC has allowed competent practitioners to help fill the void in our community which is sorely lacking adequate numbers of professionals to cover its mental health needs.

I encourage you to pass SB 2159 out of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing.

testimony

From: abreton@juno.com
Sent: Tuesday, February 19, 2008 9:48 PM
To: testimony
Subject: Testimony for 2/22 9 a.m. Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing

DATE: February 19, 2008

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair, The Honorable Senator, David Ige Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing

FROM: Andrew Breton, LMHC NCC
419 Atkinson Dr. #1203, Honolulu HI

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions
Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing
Hearing February 22, 2008 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 229

Chairman and members of the committee,

Thank you for hearing this bill and for the opportunity to provide testimony for SB 2159. I strongly support the SB 2159, a bill to repeal of the sunset clause of the Mental Health Counselor law. There are several reasons for my support.

On September 27, 2006, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) announced that the State of Hawaii had been awarded an 11 million dollar grant to create a sustainable, fully integrated, comprehensive, statewide mental health system and to implement a system-wide transformation process. After an extensive needs assessment that included all agencies that fund or provide mental health services/supports, the consumers of those services, and the families of those that receive services, one of the grant's key conclusions is that Hawaii needs to: "Declare a **State-wide emergency in hiring mental health workers in the private and public sector**" and address this need.

Mental Health Counselors could be in a key position to help Hawaii achieve this goal.

- The MHC license is a license to practice. While the preparation for a Mental Health Counselor is tough, it is not intended to produce academic professionals, but rather practicing professionals.
- Master's level degree programs tend to attract more local candidates, while the competition for Ph.D. slots is nationwide and candidates often pull up roots and move to a different geographic area for either doctorate or post-doctorate positions.
- As a Master's level degree, Mental Health Counselors have a lower earning potential, and are therefore more likely to remain in Hawaii rather than leave the islands for better pay on the mainland.

- Degrees in counseling are offered on Oahu and Hawaii. This further increases the attraction to people interested in the helping professions who are local to Hawaii and local to at least one rural, traditionally underserved area.
- The counselor training programs in the State of Hawaii emphasize cultural competence throughout their curriculum. National surveys indicate 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.
- The accreditation process for counselor training programs allows for some flexibility in training, so people who cannot afford to be unemployed for the years necessary for a Ph.D. can work towards a master's degree in counseling while keeping up with other responsibilities for the majority of their schooling. In my office of 20 people, two people are pursuing a degree in counseling. Both are local women: one with teenage sons, and another in her late twenties.

Mental Health Counselors could help Hawaii in another important way. In terms of the percent of federally matching funds (FMAP), in 2007 Hawaii ranked 31st out of 50 States and the District of Columbia. When you omit the 12 States that have only a 50% match, Hawaii ranked 31st out of 39.

(Figures are according to <http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/fmap07.htm>.)

Part of the reason Hawaii is not taking advantage of federally matching funds is the lack of Qualified Mental Health Professionals or QMHPs. QMHP is a designation of certain licensed professionals to supervise unlicensed aides and case managers. Without supervision by a QMHP, a potentially reimbursable Medicaid service cannot be certified; without certification Hawaii cannot seek matching funds.

Needless to say, lack of supervision by a Qualified Mental Health Professional also has consequences for the people receiving mental health services.

Although there has been discussion about sponsoring Mental Health Counselors to receive the QMHP designation, this cannot realistically be pursued with the uncertainty of the license represented by the sunset clause. With the sunset clause in place, it is less likely that people in Hawaii who are interested in the helping professions will invest their time in a degree whose endpoint may not be a license to practice. With fewer counselor candidates, there is one less solution for the crisis in mental health service personnel.

For the above reasons, I urge you to repeal the sunset clause in the Mental Health Counselor statute.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

testimony

From: Kenneth Fields [openmindcounseling@gmail.com]

Sent: Tuesday, February 19, 2008 9:51 PM

To: testimony

Subject: SB 2159

Kenneth Fields MA, NCC, LMHC

DATE: February 22, 2008

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair, The Honorable Senator, David Ige Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing

FROM: **Kenneth Fields**

(808) 250-9925

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

I am testifying in strong support of SB 2159.

There is little question that mental health is important to the well being of our community. It is equally important that the public have access to qualified mental health professionals who are required to meet established standards of performance. By providing state licensure to professional mental health counselors, the state ensures that the public has available such qualified individuals from whom they can seek assistance.

I strongly encourage the repeal of the sunset clause regarding mental health counselor licensure and encourage the state of Hawaii to support mental health through establishing a permanent law which allows for licensure of mental health counselors.

I encourage you to pass SB 2159 out of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing.

MAX J. LAWSON, JR. MA NCC LMHC
P.O. Box 819
91- 3168 Pikake St.
Pahala, Hawaii 96777
Telephone: 928-2040
Email: blawson626@msn.com

DATE: February 22, 2008

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair, The Honorable Senator, David Ige Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing

FROM: **NAME, DESIGNATIONS & CONTACT INFORMATION**

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

I am testifying in strong support of SB 2159.

The presence of Licensed Mental Health Counselors in the State of Hawaii has been a positive development for such places as the Kau District on the Big Island. Geographically, I work in the largest district in the State with a widely dispersed small population. Our three communities, Oceanview, Na`alehu and Pahala know of my services and the hand full of other counselors bringing essential services to our rural area. Please support SB 2159 If rejected, may people who previously who were not receiving mental health services will cease to receive what I and the other counselors have provided. Our profoundly mentally ill population must access service in Hilo and Kona and for many it is an economic improbability. By just being here we are already of service. Do not allow these good folks to go untreated.

Thank you for your kindness in allowing me to express my self briefly. I would like to have spoken in person but cannot due to personal finances at present so cannot be present. Thank you again for this venue of expression.

Respectfully submitted,

Max J. Lawson, Jr. MA, NCC, LMHC (# 111 Hawaii licensed)

I encourage you to pass SB 2159 out of the Committee on Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing.

testimony

From: Jane Jamison [kinijamison@earthlink.net]
Sent: Sunday, February 17, 2008 11:24 AM
To: testimony
Subject: Senate Committee on Commerce , Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing has scheduled SB 2159, Related to Professions for Friday, February 22, at 9::00 AM.

Jane Jamison MS
95-1059 Hoalia Street
Millilani, Hawaii 96789
kinijamison@earthlink.net

DATE: February 22, 2008

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair, The Honorable Senator, David Ige Vice - Chair and Members of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing

FROM: **Jane Jamison MS, LMHC, LPC, NCC**

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

I am testifying in strong support of SB 2159.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB2159. Licensed Mental Health Counselors have been a vital part of the counseling profession for years in most every state in the United States except for a few. At this time, California is in the process of passing legislation to welcome them into licensure. The rest of the states will follow suit as the increased need for mental health services skyrockets.

Today's society is in crisis due to economic, social, cultural, and war-related issues. The family system is no longer what it once was, a place for safety, health, and well-being. Families are no longer able to sustain their household on one income, children are left alone to fend for themselves, divorce, drug addiction, and the negative impact of war on our soldiers and their families are creating stress that increases the inability to function which also results in more criminal activity and domestic violence. Mental Health Counselors are well trained in all areas of counseling and are able to reach the various populations in need.

With the introduction of mental health services in Hawaii's educational system by mandate of the Felix decree, many LMHC's, etc, are providing services to children during very critical developmental periods of their life. Their clinical training makes them highly qualified to provide these services through the DOE and provide excellent adjunct services to the School Counselors in our schools. With the many armed service facilities that station our brave soldiers who are fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as our many veterans, PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury, and drug addiction need to be addressed by those well trained to provide them with the appropriate mental health support and counseling.

Hawaii is a state that is located in the middle of the Pacific, which makes it isolated and remote. Our state is made up of eight islands that require important medical, mental health, and social services to be disbursed across these islands. As we know, Hawaii struggles to keep doctors here due to many reasons. As a state, we also have limited number of psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers. Mental Health Counselors are absolutely necessary to providing the services our beautiful state requires to help ensure and facilitate positive well-being for our citizens, and most importantly, our keiki, who are Hawaii's and our country's future.

I encourage you to pass SB 2159 out of the Committee on Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing. Mahalo.

Most Respectfully,

2/19/2008

Jane Jamison MS

- o LPC - Licensed Professional Counselor (\some states use this title)
- o NCC - Nationally Certified Counselor

DATE: February 11, 2008

TO: The Honorable Senator David Ige, Chair, The Honorable Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair – Chair and Members of the Committee on Health

FROM: MARCUS Q. MURPHY, M.Ed., CRC, NCC, LMHC
HC 3 BOX 14,009
KEAAU, HI 96749
(808) 982-5526 (H)
(808) 961-5590 (W)
(808) 938-1267 (cell)

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

I am testifying in strong support of SB 2159.

I received my master's degree in counseling and guidance in 1974 and have worked as a counselor in various settings over the past 33 years. I first obtained my Nationally Certified Counselor credential in about 1984. I have always viewed counseling as a profession and was pleased when the state allowed for licensure for counselors. It validates the important nature of the work that counselors do in many settings. I believe that this license identifies those who are professional Mental Health Counselors. Too often the term counselor is used very loosely as in "Sales Counselor", or "Camp Counselor". I believe that it benefits the consumers to know the degree of training and professionalism possessed by those from whom they seek services. Licensure also requires ongoing continuing education to be sure those with the credential put in the time and effort to continue learning and to remain apprised of changes in the field. The term counselor is very loosely used in common usage so the possession of a license gives the consumers a way by which to judge which counselors have met professional standards.

I strongly support the continuation of the credential/license to assure that a professional level of service is provided by those calling themselves counselors. Please pass SB 2159 out of the Committee on Health.

Respectfully,

Marcus Q. Murphy

testimony

From: Gerald Evans [GeraldEvans@Hawaii.RR.Com]
Sent: Sunday, February 17, 2008 9:38 AM
To: testimony
Subject: SB 2159

Gerald Evans, M.D.
95-223 Auhaele Loop
Mililani, HI 96789

DATE: February 22, 2008
9:00 AM, Conference Room 229

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair,
The Honorable Senator, David Ige Vice – Chair
and Members of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer
Protection and Affordable Housing

FROM: Gerald Evans, M.D.
808-625-0112
geralddevans@hawaii.rr.com

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

I am testifying in strong support of SB 2159.

In the state of Hawai'i, the number of people who are homeless, disabled and commit crimes has definitely increased due to the ice epidemic/use of amphetamines. Qualified mental health counselors are needed to care for these individuals and their families. Licensed Mental Health Counselors play a most important role in addressing these challenges.

I encourage you to pass SB 2159 out of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing.

testimony

From: Monica Evans [MonicaEvans@hawaii.rr.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 17, 2008 9:23 AM
To: testimony
Subject: SB 2159

Monica Evans, MSCP, NCC, LMHC
95-223 Auhalee Loop
Mililani, HI 96789

DATE: February 22, 2008
9:00 AM, Conference Room 229

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair,
The Honorable Senator, David Ige Vice – Chair
and Members of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer
Protection and Affordable Housing

FROM: Monica Evans, MSCP, NCC, LMHC
808-625-0112, monicaevans@hawaii.rr.com

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

I am testifying in strong support of SB 2159.

While on active duty in the Army, my husband was stationed for 11 months in Iraq. I can attest to the severe strain that families experience while a loved one serves in a war zone. Recent statistics have indicated a steep increase in divorce rates among military related families.

The aftermaths of this war will affect all of us for many years to come. Many veterans and their family members need mental health services.

Licensed Mental Health Counselors provide essential care to the families of our veterans. It is imperative that licensure for these mental health professionals continues.

I encourage you to pass SB 2159 out of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing.

testimony

From: Glenda_Georgens/MAUIDO/HIDOE@notes.k12.hi.us
Sent: Monday, February 18, 2008 7:42 PM
To: testimony
Subject: Fw: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Glenda Georgens MA LMHC
ILC Program Director
808-343-0842

----- Forwarded by Glenda Georgens/MAUIDO/HIDOE on 02/18/2008 07:41 PM -----

Glenda Georgens
<g.georgens@hotmail.com>

To<glenda_georgens@notes.k12.hi.us>
cc
SubjectFW: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

02/18/2008 07:30 PM

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

DATE: FEBRUARY,22,2008

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair, The Honorable Senator David Ige Vice-Chair and Members of the Committee on Commerce Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing

**FROM: GLENDA GEORGENS,MA,LMHC,NCC,MHC
460 MAUNA PLACE PROGRAM DIRECTOR
KULA, HI 96790 INTENSIVE LEARNING CENTER
HOME # 808-878-3490 PUUNENE,HI 96784
808-281-5905**

**THERAPIST
LDS FAMILY SERVICES
MAUI ISLAND
808-343-0842**

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

2/19/2008

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 guarantees 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 that 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

Need to know the score, the latest news, or you need your Hotmail®-get your "fix". [Check it out.](#)

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Selina K. Higa, M Ed, CRC, LMHC
94-1156 Awaiki Pl.
Waipahu, HI 96797

DATE: February 22, 2008

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair, The Honorable Senator, David Ige Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing

FROM: Selina K. Higa, M Ed, CRC, LMHC
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
VA-Honolulu Regional Office

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

I am testifying in strong support of SB 2159.

I am currently employed full time with the Dept. of Veterans Affairs, Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Division as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. We are required to have our Masters degree in Counseling Education with a Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling Major and to be current as a National Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC). However, we are not currently required to have an LMHC at this time. I work with service connected disabled veterans with varying disabilities and some who have severe multiple disabilities that include physical, mental, and emotional disabilities.

We are seeing greater numbers of service connected disabled veterans with multiple injuries due to the Iraq and Afghanistan Conflicts and we will continue to see more. We have seen an increase of as many as 100 new applicants a month to our division alone. Many suffer from TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury) and PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) disabilities on top of other physical disabilities and depression due to their multiple injuries. It is definitely helpful and important that I be as qualified as possible to deal with these severely disabled veterans in assisting them with their educational needs and employment needs as a counselor. Having my License as a Mental Health Counselor also assures my supervisor and the Dept. of Veterans Affairs that I am best qualified to meet my veteran's multiple needs. Having that license also helps me to be certain that I am able to address their counseling needs especially when our medical staff is also overwhelmed with the number of new veterans knocking at our doors and the outreach we are doing to service them.

In a couple of months, approximately 3000 Army soldiers will return to Hawaii. It is expected that at least 10% of them will suffer from Mental Health issues such as PTSD and/or Depression and will require Mental Health Counseling from Licensed individuals. Therefore, even more Licensed individuals who are qualified to address their mental health needs will be essential to properly service those protecting our freedom.

I encourage you to pass SB 2159 out of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing.

Frances M. Zucco, LMHC, LPCC, NCC
Castle Professional Center
46-001 Kamehameha Highway, Suite 419 B
Kaneohe, HI 96744

DATE: February 20, 2008

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokobun, Chair, The Honorable Senator David Ige, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Affordable Housing

From: Fran Zucco, LMHC
330-6294
franzucco@hotmail.com

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professional Licensure

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am testifying in strong support of SB 2159.

I am a therapist in Private Practice as well as a full time employee of a non-profit agency on our island of Oahu. I have lived in Hawaii for the past ten (10) years and have seen the mental health needs of Hawaii's indigent, homeless, rural population, and active duty military go unmet due to the shortage of properly educated and licensed professionals. Those in Hawaii already practicing with a LCSW, PhD, and MFT license are doing great work with these populations, but there are just not enough of them to service everyone. Many have waiting lists or no longer except Quest behavioral plans. I have had people contact me reporting they have been looking for a mental health provider on the Windward side of Oahu for two to three weeks if not longer. They have indicated providers they have spoken with have long waits for first appointments or do not take their insurance carrier. Which leaves the mental health needs go untreated.

Times have changed. The Ice Epidemic and the War in Iraq have shaped our community in astounding ways. It has increased violence in our homes, leaves our families neglected or split, and our spirits broken. Mental Health counselors like myself have been educated, trained, and supervised to provide positive, strength based, and innovative short term therapies for a variety of social and emotional issues. We Counseling Professionals have been providing these services and treatments as a licensed provider for the past three (3) years and the need is there to continue. Since licensed I have successfully helped over a hundred (100) families, both in private practice and in non-profit work, become healthier and live happier in some way or another. I am not alone. There are currently 177 plus Licensed Mental Health Counselors in the state of Hawaii. Imagine the number of people that have gotten help, assistance, support, and therapy and imagine the number of people that wouldn't if this bill does not go through. Astounding!!

I encourage you to pass SB 2159 out of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Affordable Housing..

Thank You,

Fran Zucco, LMHC, LPCC, NCC

DATE: February 22, 2008

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell S. Kokubun, Chair, The Honorable Senator David Y. Ige, Vice Chair Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing Committee

FROM: Jamal F Wasan, Ph.D, MPA, LMHC, CSAC

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Aloha Senator Russell Kokubun , Senator David Y Ige, and Members of the Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Affordable Housing Committee.

I sincerely appreciate being given this opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 2159.

My name is Jamal Wasan and I am a resident of the Big Island and member of the American Mental Health Counselors Association

As a substance abuse and mental health treatment provider, I have witnessed first hand the concerns of individuals who suffer from co-occurring disorders and their struggle to remain clean and sober. People with mental illnesses are prone to develop problems with alcohol and drug use. They tend to use drugs and alcohol for the same reasons that people without a mental illness do, which makes them more sensitive to the negative effects of alcohol and drugs because it mask their underlying disorders.

The result is that one of every two individuals with severe mental illness has the additional problem of substance use disorder, (which means abuse or dependence related to alcohol or other drugs). Unfortunately, there are many individuals who have co-occurring disorders that are unintentionally overlooked. For example: Anxiety disorders and alcohol dependence co-occur at an alarming rate and often goes unrecognized because of the shortage of Licensed Mental Health providers in substance abuse facilities. A study in the August 2005 issue of *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research* examines what effects a co-existing anxiety disorder may have on relapse following treatment for alcoholism. The results indicated that two of the most common anxiety disorders found among alcoholics – social phobia and panic disorder – are more strongly associated with alcohol relapse than other anxiety disorders. Research clearly shows that the most significant indicator of relapse is the co-occurring disorder that has gone untreated.

I also speak from personal experience as a young marine wounded in Vietnam and who became addicted to pain medications after release from the hospital. When I was honorably discharged at the completion of my enlistment in the United States Marine Corps in 1968, I struggled to stay clean, unaware that my co-occurring symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was not being addressed. It was ambushing me in my struggle. It wasn't until I relapsed in 1996 and was diagnosed by the Department of Veterans Affairs with suffering from PTSD, related to my tour of duty as a marine rifleman. I was at last allowed to find some relief.

Because of this experience, and a sincere to help others suffering from co-existing disorders, that I was able to be part of establishing the first Integrated Outpatient Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment Facility, fully accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). We, Lokahi Treatment Centers, are able to treat large numbers of co-occurring clients. However, many went without integrated treatment for their co-occurring disorder because of the shortage of Licensed Mental Health Professionals who are able and willing to work with this population. The inclusion of Licensed Mental Health Counselors into this area has been a tremendous asset. These individuals, a number of whom held masters in counseling and certification as substance abuse counselors, are now able to provide integrated services either as private practitioners or as employees of substance abuse facilities. It is proven axiom among health care professionals that knowledge and experience are the keys to successful treatment. Academia provide the knowledge, experience comes from working in the field. By licensing mental health counselors, you have now combined knowledge with experience. I strongly encourage you to pass SB 2159 out of committee, so we can continue using these professionals to provide quality care and give consumers the right to have access to these professionals.

It should be noted that 49 states have licensed mental health counselors and The Department of Veterans Affairs now recognize licensed mental health counselors and actively advertises LMHC's services for treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Also, Hawaii Health Care Providers such as; University Health Alliance, AlohaCare-Quest, Summerlain Commercial/Quest, Kaiser Permanente, and HMA Inc have voluntarily granted credentialing and provider-ship to LMHC's, without being required by a vendorship law. This speaks directly to their trust in the skills and ability of LMHC's. Also Major Employer Assistance Program (EAP) programs such as: COMPSYC, Mental Health Network (MHN), and Hawaii Employer assistance Services (HEAS) refer their employees to LMHC's. These are all indicators of the confidence they hold in the excellence of Hawaii's Academic System which educate mental health counselors, the Accreditation bodies which inspect and accredit the curriculum for mental health counselors and the national professional organizations; American Counseling Association and American Mental Health Counselors Association, which provide ethical guidelines and other standards to the members of this profession.

The bottom-line is that consumers now have greater access to quality mental health services. Failure to repeal the sunset law would deprive the consumer of retaining this greater access and their ability to choice from a larger pool of regulated mental health providers. Please do not take away this right.

DATE: February 22, 2008

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair, The Honorable Senator, David Ige Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing

FROM: Valerie T. Poindexter, O’okala, Hawaii

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Aloha Honorable Representative Josh Green, Honorable Representative John Mizuno and Members of the Committee on Health,

My name is Valerie Poindexter and I was born and raised in a rural plantation community in the district of Hamakua on the Big Island of Hawaii. I want to thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 2159.

The benefit of licensure to the public can be examined in the access to mental health care services across socio-economic and geographic lines. In the State of Hawaii, the public’s access to mental health care services is severely limited within Medicare, Medicaid and Quest guidelines. Since “licensed” providers are recognized by Medicare, Medicaid and Quest; and “certified” providers are not, it is essential to the public, especially those of limited means, that Mental Health Counselors be licensed.

The importance of access to mental health treatment is best understood through what happens if the public does not have access to mental health services. Work productivity goes down; more people are homeless or in jail; health outcomes for people with heart disease; chronic pain, cancer, etc., go down; and the need for medical care, including hospital admissions, goes up (from information developed by the Coalition for Insurance Parity, January 12, 2000).

Rural communities in the State of Hawaii have always and continues to suffer disproportionately from a shortage of health care services, especially in the mental health profession. In 2002 the National Mental Health Information Center reported that an estimated 148,947 youths in the State of Hawaii, between the ages of 9-17, had serious emotional disturbances. And the numbers only continue to increase because of the shortage of affordable health care services in our rural communities and in our urban communities as well. This alarming number also does not include youths who are homeless or institutionalized.

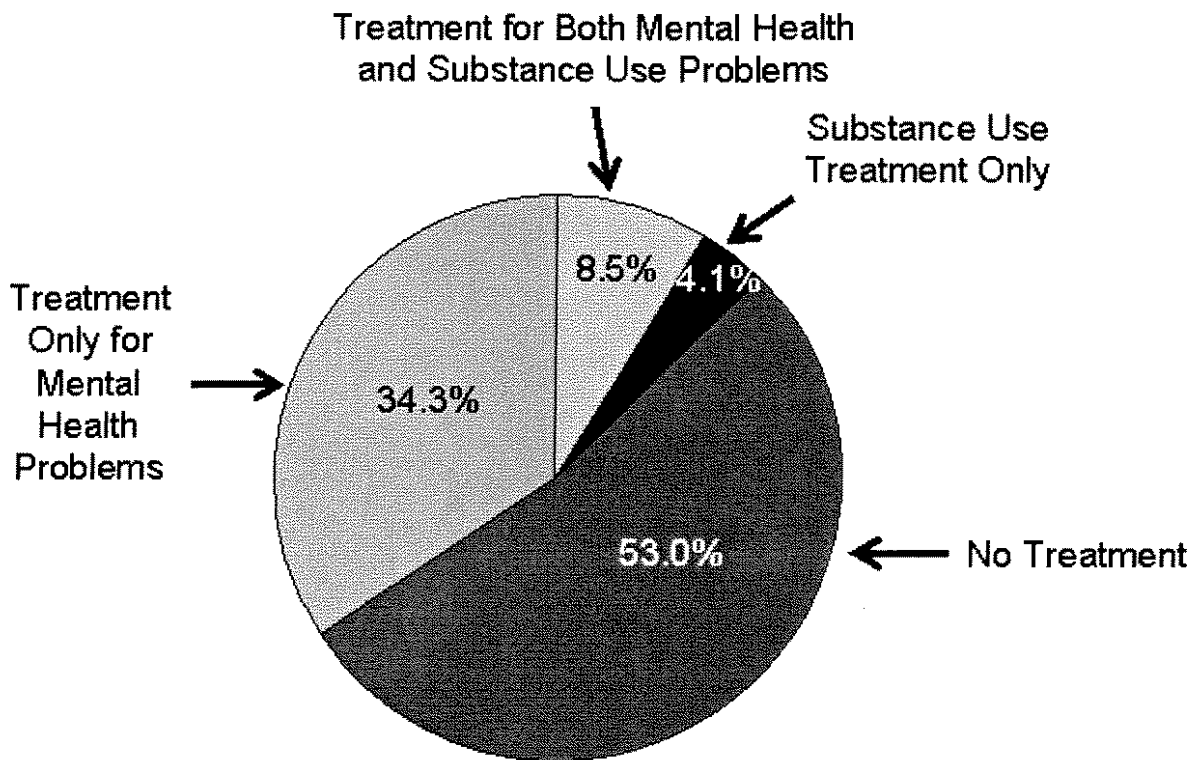
The National Mental Health Information Center also reported in 2002 that an estimated 949,384 adults, 18 years and older, in the State of Hawaii had serious mental illness. This alarming number also does not include adults who are homeless or institutionalized.

Population growth along with persons with mental health problems and co-occurring disorders will be disastrous for the State of Hawaii if they are left untreated. According to the US Census Bureau and in the State of Hawaii, leading the growth in population from 2005 to 2006 was Hawaii County with a growth rate of 2.8 percent, followed by Maui County (+1.2%), Kauai County (+1.0%), and Honolulu County grew the least at 0.6 percent. Please note that these statistics are lower than actual because these are only known reported cases.

Over the past several years, the districts that have seen the fastest population growth are Hamakua, Puna, South Kohala, North Kohala, Kau, and North Kona.

Hawaii County's growth rate has far outpaced that of the state as a whole. Yet health care services in our rural communities still remain to be minimal. To make matters worse, there is no viable public transportation connecting the Puna district with other communities on the Big Island, nor is there any viable public transportation within the district itself. It is the same situation for the Kohala District. Our rural communities are suffering, especially where booming sugar industries made its last mass exodus 12 years ago, in 1996, with nothing to replace it, causing a major upheaval in all aspects of peoples lives, especially their mental health. A majority of people affected have gone untreated for all these years because of the lack of affordable mental health services in their communities.

The State of Hawaii has spent millions of dollars to battle the Crystal Methamphetamine "Ice" Epidemic, however, they failed to recognize the importance of mental health services that were simultaneously needed to fight this battle. A person who has both an alcohol or drug problem and an emotional/psychiatric problem is said to have a co-occurring disorder. To recovery fully, the person needs treatment for both problems. Recent studies show that over half of adults with co-occurring disorders receive no treatment for either disorder. The results from the 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health are as follows:



**5.2 Million Adults with Co-Occurring SPD and
Substance Use Disorder**

The 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health goes on to say that an estimated 24.6 million American adults, over age 18, reported experiencing "serious psychological distress" (SPD) during

the preceding year. More than an estimated 30 million adults reported experiencing at least one episode of major depression during their lives.

Researchers gathered the information by administering the K6 instrument to respondents as part of the larger survey. The scale consists of six questions about symptoms of emotional distress experienced by respondents during one month in the prior year at a time when they were feeling their worst emotionally.

The six items ask about symptoms related to feelings of depression, anxiety, restlessness, and hopelessness and were scored on the basis of their frequency. The scale ranges from 0 to 24 points, and respondents with a score of 13 or higher were classified as experiencing serious psychological distress.

Women reported more psychological distress than did men. Additionally, in 2005 adults who used illicit drugs during the previous year were significantly more likely to report serious psychological distress than those who did not use an illicit drug.

Studies show that in order for our rural and urban communities to receive the necessary affordable mental health services, we need to reduce professional competition. A study entitled: STATE LICENSURE LAWS AND THE MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE RURAL MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE was completed in October of 2002 by the Maine Rural Health Research Center, whose mission is to inform health care policymaking and the delivery of rural health services through high quality, policy relevant research, policy analysis and technical assistance on rural health issues of regional and national significance. As indicated in their findings, evidence of the “guild environment” existed in current licensure laws. Licensed professions continue to seek limitations on the scopes of practice for other professions to protect their professional niche. When a profession seeks to secure exclusive rights to a specific practice, they must argue that other professions are not qualified in this area – an argument based on quality, often expressed as years of education. A profession may set extensive requirements for entry into the profession, such as many hours of supervised practice, or requiring a doctorate. Requiring that only members of the profession can supervise, or that a certain number of hours of supervision must be face-to-face, further establishes an explicit “gateway” into the profession, similar to an apprenticeship in a traditional guild. These strategies are rational means of protecting the market for a profession’s services in an environment where there are ample members of multiple professions competing for market share. Please DO NOT allow this type of competition to fester in the State of Hawaii. Stand strong and protect our people and provide them with the necessary health care services that are desperately needed and long overdue. Allow our Licensed Mental Health Counselors to continue the excellent work that they have been providing for the past several years. Do not strip our communities of this benefit.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my testimony and I encourage all of you to support our rural and urban communities and its mental health care needs by passing Senate Bill 2159 out of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing.

Wendy Pagador, M.Ed., NCC
P O Box 17
Laie, HI 96762

DATE: February 20, 2008

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair,
The Honorable Senator, David Ige Vice – Chair
and Members of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and
Affordable Housing

FROM: Wendy Pagador, M.Ed., NCC,
wendy.pagador@byuh.edu

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions, Hearing: February 22nd, 9am

I am writing to testify in strong support of SB 2159.

I believe it is very important to continue the Mental Health Counselors Licensure Law in Hawaii. I live on the North Shore and plan to pursue licensure and serve the population here, and particularly want to be available to women who prefer female counselors. The Licensure law pushes me and others to pursue continuing education and provide a quality service. It is important for those seeking help to know they have rights and can expect a certain standard, as most of us want in the professional services that each of us use.

Requiring counselors to be licensed will enable those to get help, who may not before have been able, third paying parties will know the level of service being provided by counselors. I believe many here, including homeless and some cultures who are less familiar with counseling, would benefit from professional help but do not get it because they just don't know where to go, or if they do, are unable to travel or to pay for it.

This law I believe would increase the amount of qualified counselors available to these populations on this side of the island and at the same time open up education to the public about counseling and help available. Furthermore, in small communities there often arises the complication of dual relationships and counselors need to find others to help because they know clients already. By passing this law and increasing the number of qualified counselors available, the likelihood of dual relationship issues should decrease.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.
I encourage you to pass SB 2159 out of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing.

Sincerely,

DATE: February 22, 2008

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell Kokubun, Chair, The Honorable Senator, David Ige, Vice-Chair and Members of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing


FROM: Laura M. Sullivan, Licensed Mental Health Counselor, #36, State of Hawaii, 84-740 Kili Drive, 1027, Waianae, HI 96792
Phone: 808-695-1221 Cell: 206-841-1704

RE: Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. **I am testifying in strong support of SB 2159.** More licensed mental health professionals are needed to give quality mental health counseling to families and children here in Hawaii. By licensing Mental Health Counselors, the state of Hawaii can guarantee that the people here in Hawaii receive ethical and good-quality counseling treatment. Licensure of Mental Health Counselors, particularly with the deletion of the "sunset provision" in the current law enables the good people of Hawaii to continue to receive quality care from qualified Mental Health Counselors.

In the rural areas of Oahu and the neighbor islands, there are currently not as many qualified mental health professionals to meet the mental health needs of families. Licensing qualified Mental Health Counselors will ensure that effective mental health care is given to families in Hawaii, including the rural areas. Many families in Hawaii face economic stressors, and stressors such as job changes separation, divorce, health problems, drug and alcohol addictions. All of these problems cause depression and other mental health problems. Therefore, the families of Hawaii are entitled to the best mental health care they can receive from licensed mental health professionals. **I urge you to pass SB 2159 out of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing.**

Sincerely,


Laura M. Sullivan