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DATE: Friday, February 22, 2008; Conference Room #229, 9:00 a.m.

TO: The Honorable Russell S. Kokubun, Chair, The Honorable David Y. Ige, Vice-Chair, and members of the COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, CONSUMER PROTECTION AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

FROM: Marcia Myers, Licensed Mental Health Counselor

RE: SB2159, Relating to the Professions

I thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT of SB 2159.**

To underscore the mission of Licensed Mental Health Counselors, I would like to address the overwhelming need in our community for more mental health professionals to serve, not only the rural areas of Hawaii, but also the urban section that is becoming more and more populated year after year. If you pick up the newspaper daily, you find many articles describing incidents of violence right here in our island state. It appears to be increasing. Many of these incidents could be prevented with enough well-qualified professionals to assist people of all ages and abilities to develop life-enhancing skills and better coping methods. Mental Health Counselors are highly qualified and well trained to provide these services.

Repealing the sunset date for licensed mental health counselors will enhance the number of qualified professionals to care for those dealing with depression, PTSD, stress/anxiety, and other mental health issues that are affecting many of the citizens and communities of Hawaii.

I encourage you to **PASS SB 2159** out of the Committee on Consumer Protection and Affordable Housing as one method of helping to address the increasing and apparent need for qualified mental health counselors in our state.