

SB2159

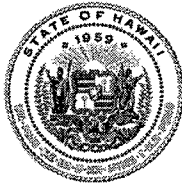
Measure Title:
RELATING TO PROFESSIONS.

Report Title:
Regulation of Mental Health Counselors; Sunset; Repealed

Description:
Repeals sunset provisions for chapter 453D, Hawaii Revised Statutes, relating to mental health counselors, to be effective upon approval.

Introducer(s):
BAKER, CHUN OAKLAND, ENGLISH, ESPERO, FUKUNAGA, IGE, KOKUBUN,
NISHIHARA, TSUTSUI

Current Referral:
HTH, CPH



LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR
JAMES R. AIONA, JR.
LT. GOVERNOR

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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS
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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 HEALTH

TWENTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE
Regular Session of 2008

Monday, February 11, 2008
1:15 p.m.

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

TO THE HONORABLE DAVID Y. IGE, 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

From: Sheriann Daniels [rcioaconsulting@yahoo.com]
Sent: Friday, February 08, 2008 8:03 PM
To: testimony
Subject: SB 2159

DATE: February 11, 2008

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

FROM: **Sheri-Ann Daniels, MSCP, CSAC, LMHC**

363 Ohaa Street, Kahului HI 96732

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

I am testifying in strong support of SB 2159.

As a Licensed Mental Health Counselor on Maui , it is important to support this bill as it will allow for the continued availability of LMHC in the neighbor island communities, where there is already a limited number of professionals in the counseling field.

LMHC are just as essential to social services and mental health services as are our social worker and other human service professionals in the field as we help people and communities become stronger.

The need for LMHC (and other licensed professionals) has increased with the need by various government bodies requiring the

licensed professional to provide the services in the community. This is already a challenge in the neighbor island areas where there is already a shortage of advanced degreed individuals.

I encourage you to pass SB 2159 out of the Committee on Health

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

DATE: February 11, 2008

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

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 177 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, unamended out of the Committee on Health

Testimony of
Phyllis Dendle
Director of Government Affairs

Senate Committee on Health
The Honorable David Y. Ige, Chair
The Honorable Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

February 11, 2008
1:15 PM
Conference Room 016

SB2159 RELATING TO PROFESSIONS

Chair Ige 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.



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

DATE: February 11, 2008

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

FROM: Betty Sestak, Rehabilitation Counselor

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.

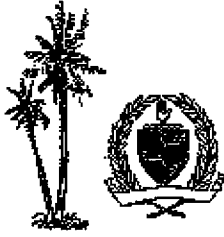
I am in favor of SB 2159 and strongly support its passage.

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

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

HAWAII REHABILITATION COUNSELING ASSOCIATION

P O BOX 4385
HONOLULU, HI 96812



DATE: February 11, 2008

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

FROM: Betty Sestak, HRCA Legislative Chair

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 SB2159 out of the Committee on Health

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Betty Sestak, MS, NCC, CRC, LMHC
Rehabilitation counselor

DATE: February 11, 2008

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

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

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

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.

It is because of this personal experience, and a sincere effort 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. The bottom-line is that these services are now more readily available and should not be withdrawn.

DATE: February 11, 2008

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

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

RE: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Aloha Honorable Senator David Ige, Honorable Senator Carol Fukunaga, 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.

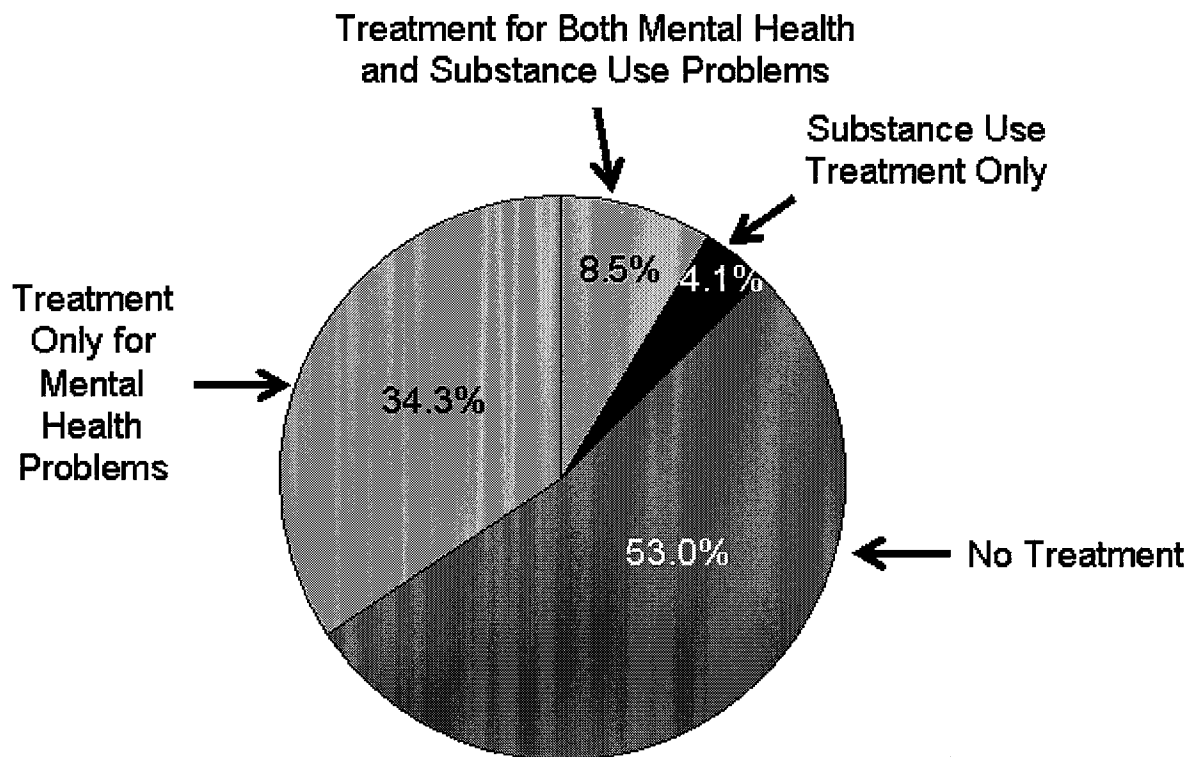
The National Mental Health Information Center also reported in 2002 that an estimated 949,384 adults, 18 years and older, in the State of Hawaii had serious mental illness. This alarming number also does not include adults who are homeless or institutionalized.

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 Health.



***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 08, 2008**

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

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 Hawai`i 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 **SB 2159** out of the Committee on Health.

Malama pono,

Joddy Manuwai, LMHC, NCC*

*National Board of Certified Counselors

testimony

From: Kenneth Fields [openmindcounseling@gmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 10, 2008 2:22 PM
To: testimony
Subject: SB 2159

Kenneth Fields, MA, NCC, LMHC

DATE: February 11, 2008

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

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 Health

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

DATE: February 11, 2008

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

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

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 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. 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 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 170 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 Health.

Thank You,

Fran Zucco, LMHC, LPCC, NCC

Ruth C. Viafara
1024 Green Street # 7
Honolulu, HI 96822
Viafara@hawaii.edu

February 11, 2008

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

FROM: Ruth C. Viafara
1024 Green Street #7
Honolulu, HI 96822
Phone (808) 722-3198
viafara@hawaii.edu

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 graduate student of Counseling and Rehabilitation at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, I know all too well that often veterans and service members require help getting the assistance they need when it comes to getting treatment for psychological wounds and / or traumatic brain injuries received while serving in Iraq, Afghanistan and even earlier conflicts. I also recognize that with extended deployments and with the astronomical escalating number of casualties the waiting period for the soldier's proper care is getting longer and longer. It is a well know factor that the VA administration and the VA hospital are experiencing much difficulty recruiting counseling professionals locally in the state of Hawaii.

By continuing with the Hawaii Mental Health Counselor Licensure law the legislature will contribute to help better those who served their country and are suffering because of it.

I am also aware that counselors endeavor to help wounded military personnel to tackle problems large and small - those lingering from the front and others arising from being home. Counselors have helped steer those returning into new jobs, into school, and back into productive lives. The program even claims lives saved from potential suicide. The problems are massive, however, and there are many who have not been reached. "It's going to take a tremendous amount of counselor's effort over the next 10 years to take care of these people," said Maj. John Morris, Minnesota National Guard chaplain.

To better illustrate the dire situation in which people in uniform find themselves, Spec 4, Eugene Cherry an army medic who served in Iraq with the 10th Mountain Division and returned home with severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Unfortunately, Cherry's experiences are ones that VFA has seen many, many times. Cursory exposure to the psychiatrist in the field, long waits for appointments back in America, commanders making it next to impossible for service members with mental injuries to receive help, going AWOL: this is a pattern that affects more and more service members returning from Iraq, Afghanistan and even from Vietnam. The numbers will keep growing until the well-intentioned pronouncements about the military treating mental injuries as seriously as it does physical injuries makes its way into the heads of combatant commanders. Military commanders need to realize that the men and women in uniform need counseling and counselor to provide them with the help they really need.

By continuing the Hawaii Mental Health Counselors Licensure Law the Hawaii legislature will enable qualified mental health counselors to join with other professionals to address the psychological needs of these veterans and their families. Please pass HB 2566

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

DATE: February 11, 2008

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

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: SB 2159, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am testifying in strong support of SB 2159. Licensed mental health professionals are needed to give quality mental health counseling to families and children here in Hawaii. By licensing mental health counseling professionals, the state can ensure that the people 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, who can give effective mental health care to these families, is in the best interest of the state of Hawaii. Many families in Hawaii face economic pressure with the down-turn of the economy. Mental health professionals know that financial stressors such as job changes, separation, divorce, health problems, and drugs cause depression and mental 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 Health to ensure our families in Hawaii get good mental health support from Licensed Mental Health Counselors.

Sincerely,



Laura Sullivan

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

L A T E

DATE: February 11, 2008

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

FROM: Selina K. Higa, M Ed, CRC, LMHC
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
Dept. of Veterans Affairs, 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 Afganistan 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 few 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 Health