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**Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs**

**Before the  
Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Health  
Wednesday, February 19, 2020  
9:00 a.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229**

**On the following measure:  
S.B. 2877, RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELORS**

Chair Baker and Members of the Committee:

My name is Charlene Tamanaha, and I am the Licensing Administrator of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs' (Department) Professional and Vocational Licensing Division. The Department supports this administration bill.

The purposes of this bill are to: (1) clarify that the practicum internship experience requirement shall be included with the course work in counseling requirement for mental health counselors; and (2) clarify the supervision requirements of licensure for mental health counselors by permitting applicants to fulfill all or part of their face-to-face clinical supervision requirement by videoconference.

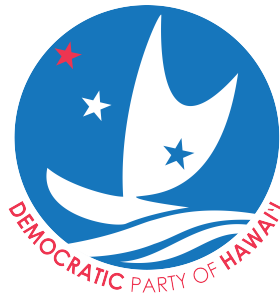
The Department's Mental Health Counselor Licensing Program (Program) is the only jurisdiction that includes the practicum internship requirement as a separate, standalone requirement rather than include it with the course work in counseling requirement. As such, all applicants for a Hawaii mental health counselor license must provide 54 semester hours or 82 quarter hours of course work training, versus the

national licensing standard of 48 semester hours or 72 quarter hours in course work in counseling.

This bill makes the practicum internship requirement a part of the course work in counseling requirement, thereby aligning the Program's licensing requirements with the national licensing standards of 48 semester hours or 72 quarter hours in course work in counseling.

This bill also streamlines post-graduate experience requirements by allowing the supervision requirement to be fulfilled, in part or whole, through videoconference. Currently, HRS section 453D-7(a)(3) requires post-graduate experience of 3,000 hours, including 100 hours of face-to-face supervision. Due to the prevalence of online courses through accredited universities and colleges, allowing the face-to-face supervision requirement to be completed through videoconference allows applicants some flexibility in completing their post-graduate work experience with both the supervisor and clinic or facility of their choice. This also eases the applicants' burden of always needing a face-to-face, in-person meeting with the supervisor, particularly in the case of neighbor island candidates who work in clinics on the neighbor islands and who need to communicate with supervisors on Oahu.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and we respectfully ask the Committee to pass this administration bill.



Wednesday, February 19, 2020

Senate Bill 2877  
Testifying in Support

Aloha Chair Baker, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Health,

The Democratic Part of Hawai'i (The Party) stands in **support of SB2877** Relating to Mental Health Counselors, which clarifies that the practicum internship experience requirement shall be included with the course work in counseling requirement for mental health counselors. Clarifies the supervision requirements of licensure for mental health counselors by permitting applicants to fulfill all or part of their face-to-face clinical supervision requirement by a videoconference service.

Given the geography of the state of Hawai'i and the low number of qualified mental health professionals available in some of the more rural areas, this clarification to the licensure requirement, (allowing clinical supervision to take place via HIPAA compliant modes of technology), will in fact increase the amount of professional who can obtain licensure, thereby increasing access to behavioral health services to the residents of the state of Hawai'i.

There have been many studies conducted on the effectiveness of Tele-supervision, and it began being implemented in states with rural geography in 2016.

“Clinical supervision is integral to continuing professional development of health professionals. With advances in technology, clinical supervision too can be undertaken using mediums such as videoconference, email and teleconference. This mode of clinical supervision is termed as tele-supervision. While tele-supervision could be useful in any context, its value is amplified for health professionals working in rural and remote areas where access to supervisors within the local work environment is often diminished.”

Hawai'i already struggles with attracting and keeping mental health professionals for a myriad of reasons. Let's focus on removing the barriers, not creating them.

It is for these reasons that we encourage a favorable vote on this bill.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Josh Frost  
Co-Chair, Legislation Committee  
Democratic Party of Hawai'i

Zahava Zaidoff  
Co-Chair, Legislation Committee  
Democratic Party of Hawai'i

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214782917300131>

**SB-2877**

Submitted on: 2/15/2020 3:02:25 PM

Testimony for CPH on 2/19/2020 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Joanne King	Testifying for Joanne King Counseling	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I am Joanne King and am a candidate for licensure for a Mental Health Counselor. I have completed the Mental Health Counseling program at the University of Hawaii, Hilo.

I am writing in strong support of SB2877. The proposed change in the mental health counselor licensure law is directly relevant to the graduates in the Master of Arts Program (Specialization: Clinical Mental Health Counseling) at the University of Hawaii at Hilo. These graduates are trained to be eligible for this license. The current version of the law accidentally placed the 6-credit fieldwork requirement ("Practicum Intern Experience" with a total of 300 direct client hours) as a separate requirement from the 48-credit curriculum requirement, thereby changing the overall requirement to 54 credits. As the intent of the law was to require a 48-credit training, which is consistent with the licensing laws of other states, SB2877 will fix this important flaw.

Also, I strongly recommend that the bill should change the wording on page 3, line 20, which references the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM), from "DSM-IV" to "DSM." The "IV" refers to the edition of the DSM to be used by mental health providers, and is updated once every several years, including the edition designation. By changing the designation from DSM-IV to DSM, the bill keeps the law current without requiring the statute to be changed on a periodic basis.

Furthermore, I request that the law be amended in Section (J), to read "At least two academic terms of supervised mental health practicum intern experience for graduate credit

of at least six semester hours or ten quarter hours in a mental health counseling setting, with **a total of** three hundred hours of supervised client contact.” The law needs to be clear that the 300 hours are the total accrued hours across two semesters.

This change is critical for being able to obtain licensure on a timely basis.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Joanne King, M. A.

Joanne King Counseling

**SB-2877**

Submitted on: 2/15/2020 9:26:29 AM

Testimony for CPH on 2/19/2020 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Bryan Kim, Ph.D.	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Senator Rosalyn Baker and the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health:

My name is Bryan Kim, PhD, and I am a Professor of Psychology and Director of the Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology Program (Specialization: Clinical Mental Health Counseling) at the University of Hawaii at Hilo. I am writing in strong support of SB2877. The proposed change in the mental health counselor licensure law is directly relevant to our graduates in the MA Program, as they are trained to be eligible for this license. The current version of the law accidentally placed the 6-credit fieldwork requirement (“Practicum Intern Experience” with a total of 300 direct client hours) as a separate requirement from the 48-credit curriculum requirement, thereby changing the overall requirement to 54 credits. As the intent of the law was to require a 48-credit training, which is consistent with the licensing laws of other states, SB2877 will fix this important flaw.

Also, we strongly recommend that the bill should change the wording on page 3, line 20, which references the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM), from “DSM-IV” to “DSM.” The “IV” refers to the edition of the DSM to be used by mental health providers, and is updated once every several years, including the edition designation. By changing the designation from DSM-IV to DSM, the bill keeps the law current without requiring the statute to be changed on a periodic basis.

Furthermore, we request that the law be amended in Section (J), to read "At least two academic terms of supervised mental health practicum intern experience for graduate credit of at least six semester hours or ten quarter hours in a mental health counseling setting, with a **total of** three hundred hours of supervised client contact." The law needs to be clear that the 300 hours are the total accrued hours across two semesters.

Sincerely,

Bryan S. K. Kim, PhD

**SB-2877**

Submitted on: 2/15/2020 11:13:31 AM

Testimony for CPH on 2/19/2020 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Faith Gilley	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Senator Rosalyn Baker and the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health:

My name is Faith Gilley and I am a current student at the University of Hawaii at Hilo in the Counseling Psychology Master of Arts program. I am writing in strong support of SB2877. The proposed change in the mental health counselor licensure law is directly relevant to the graduates in the Master of Arts Program (Specialization: Clinical Mental Health Counseling) at the University of Hawaii at Hilo. These graduates are trained to be eligible for this license. The current version of the law accidentally placed the 6-credit fieldwork requirement ("Practicum Intern Experience" with a total of 300 direct client hours) as a separate requirement from the 48-credit curriculum requirement, thereby changing the overall requirement to 54 credits. As the intent of the law was to require a 48-credit training, which is consistent with the licensing laws of other states, SB2877 will fix this important flaw.

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Furthermore, I request that the law be amended in Section (J), to read "At least two academic terms of supervised mental health practicum intern experience for graduate credit of at least six semester hours or ten quarter hours in a mental health counseling setting, with a **total of** three hundred hours of supervised client contact." The law needs to be clear that the 300 hours are the total accrued hours across two semesters.

Sincerely,

Faith Gilley

**SB-2877**

Submitted on: 2/17/2020 2:58:52 AM

Testimony for CPH on 2/19/2020 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Cree Sonsona	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Wednesday, February 19, 2020

9:00 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 229

Support for S.B. No. 2877, H.B. No. 2321

Hello, my name is Cree Sonsona and I am a senior at Kalani High School. I am testifying in support of the bill for an act relating to mental health counselors, also known as SB 2877.

The reason that I am testifying in favor of this bill is that it will have a majorly positive impact on the public. The topic of mental health is becoming increasingly important and common in this generation. With the percentage of adult depression in Hawaii being nearly 12%, it's important that we use our resources to the best of their ability. Mental health counselors are becoming more and more necessary. Roughly 29% of the state's high school population is showing signs of depression according to [hhs.gov](https://hhs.gov), which is under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Nowadays with teenagers being exposed to nearly unlimited amounts of information, both good and bad, we need to be sure that they have the proper counseling available if and when they need it. This bill will ensure that the mental health counselors of the future are well educated, prepared, and experienced for their profession.

With the proper measures being taken to prepare mental health professionals, this generation and all to come are surely in better hands. Thank you for your time.



**SB-2877**

Submitted on: 2/15/2020 12:38:19 PM

Testimony for CPH on 2/19/2020 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Sharon Petrosky	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Senator Rosalyn Baker and the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health:

My name is Sharon Petrosky. I am writing in strong support of SB2877. The proposed change in the mental health counselor licensure law is directly relevant to the graduates in the Master of Arts Program (Specialization: Clinical Mental Health Counseling) at the University of Hawaii at Hilo. These graduates are trained to be eligible for this license. The current version of the law accidentally placed the 6-credit fieldwork requirement ("Practicum Intern Experience" with a total of 300 direct client hours) as a separate requirement from the 48-credit curriculum requirement, thereby changing the overall requirement to 54 credits. As the intent of the law was to require a 48-credit training, which is consistent with the licensing laws of other states, SB2877 will fix this important flaw.

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Furthermore, I request that the law be amended in Section (J), to read "At least two academic terms of supervised mental health practicum intern experience for graduate credit of at least six semester hours or ten quarter hours in a mental health counseling setting, with **a total of** three hundred hours of supervised client contact." The law needs to be clear that the 300 hours are the total accrued hours across two semesters.

Sincerely,

Sharon Petrosky

**SB-2877**

Submitted on: 2/18/2020 7:32:46 AM

Testimony for CPH on 2/19/2020 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Jenna Schneider Mercado	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

To: The Committee on CPH

Decreasing barriers to licensure for mental health counselors, while maintaining professional standards, is incredibly important for the growth and development of the field of behavioral and mental health. Excellent mental health counselors will be in high demand well into the future as stigmas surrounding mental healthcare continue to decrease and more people seek therapeutic care. Whether a licensure candidate is able to have in-person clinical supervision or clinical supervision via face-to-face telecommunication should not dictate the validity of the supervision hours. The intimacy and increased accessibility and security of face-to-face telecommunication supervision make it just as valuable and valid as in-person supervision.

As a Master of Social Work student in my final semester at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, this bill directly affects my mine and my colleagues' path to clinical licensure after graduation. Living on a small island, especially for those on remote outer islands, it can be difficult to find an appropriate, licensed individual to provide in-person supervision for the duration of required post-graduate experience. Clarifying this bill to include clinical supervision via face-to-face telecommunication would do a great service to future mental health professionals such as myself and my cohort by decreasing barriers to licensure and helping us serve clients in remote locations without concern for in-person supervision.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Sincerely,

Jenna Schneider Mercado