

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

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Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

**Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Friday, April 5, 2024
10:20 a.m.
Conference Room 211 and Videoconference**

**On the following measure:
H.B. 1830, H.D. 2, S.D. 1, RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committees:

My name is Rochelle Araki, and I am the Executive Officer for the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (Department) Professional and Vocational Licensing Division's (Division), Marriage and Family Therapy Program, Mental Health Counselors Licensing Program, and Social Worker Licensing Program. The Department offers comments on this bill.

The purposes of this bill are to: (1) establish provisional or associate-level licensure requirements for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists and authorize insurance reimbursements in certain circumstances; (2) authorize psychologist license applicants that possess a provisional license to sit for the licensing examination before completing certain supervised experience requirements; (3) authorize insurance reimbursements for services provided by a supervised social work intern in certain circumstances; and (4) appropriate funds.

The Department limits its comments to Part II, Part III and Part V and Part VI of this bill as follows:

H.B. 1830, H.D.2, S.D. 1, requires the Department to grant, upon application and payment of proper fees, provisional licensure as an associate marriage and family therapist and mental health counselor to those who meet certain requirements to obtain reimbursement for services rendered. While the Department appreciates the intent of this measure, the creation of this new license type appears contrary to the provisions of Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) section 26H-2, which provides, in part, that “the regulation and licensing of professions and vocations shall be undertaken only where reasonably necessary to protect the health, safety, or welfare of consumers of the services; the purpose of regulation shall be the protection of the public welfare and not that of the regulated profession or vocation.” A new licensure scheme should not be implemented solely for the purpose of reimbursement. There may be unintended consequences of regulating or requiring licensure of a currently exempted population of professionals who provide mental health services. For example, the cost of services provided by these individuals may increase and could possibly be passed on to consumers.

Regarding part V, the Department expresses similar concerns that authorizing reimbursements to a currently exempted population: social worker interns, could have unintended consequences such as higher costs for services rendered. These costs could be passed on to consumers.

Regarding Part VI, the Department appreciates the consideration of personnel and appropriation for funding. However, the Department requests appropriation of general funds upon implementation to ensure the division can hire staff and update its system to accommodate the new licensure as revenues supporting these expenses will not be collected until a later timeframe. Consequently, the Department respectfully requests that the following general fund amounts be inserted in the bill to ensure proper implementation:

1. General fund appropriation to allow the Division:

- a. To establish, recruit, and hire an office assistant V (OA-V) to process provisional license applications expeditiously. The sum of \$73,406¹ or so much thereof may be necessary to fund this position.
- b. To make the appropriate updates to its internal database. The required updates may take upwards of 500 support hours to create these new license types and the associated requirements. These hours would be added onto the already extensive daily work of the Division's developer, program analyst, and others outside of the division. The sum of \$75,000 or so much thereof may be necessary to fund this request.

The Department may, as done with other professions, assess a fee to the applicant, to pay back the general fund. If the Committee is inclined to do this, it may consider adding the following language to Part VI, section 34, page 48:

- (3) Fees assessed shall defray costs incurred by the department to support the operations of the licensing programs. Fees collected shall be managed in accordance with section 26-9(l).

The Department understands the importance of this bill and respectfully requests general funding for start-up costs. This would be an unfunded mandate and would require an extraordinary amount of time and effort to ensure proper implementation of these new license types.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

¹ OA-V: \$44,760 (salary) + \$28,656 fringe = \$73,406



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

1010 Richards Street, Room 118 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V) • TTY (808) 586-8162 • Fax (808) 586-8129

April 5, 2024

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

House Bill 1830 HD2 SD1 – Relating to Mental Health

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports House Bill 1830 HD2 SD1 – Relating to Mental Health.

This bill establishes provisional or associate-level licensure requirements for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists and authorizes insurance reimbursements in certain circumstances. It authorizes psychologist license applicants that possess a provisional license to sit for the licensing examination before completing certain supervised experience requirements. And it authorizes insurance reimbursements for services provided by a supervised social work intern in certain circumstances.

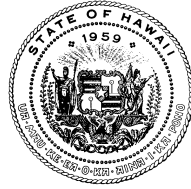
Hawaii residents find it challenging to obtain vital mental health services. The issue needs to be addressed in a variety of ways, and this bill is a positive step toward solving the problem.

Thank you for considering our position.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW
Executive Director

JOSH B. GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA
MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I



KATHERINE AUMER, PhD
COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON
LUNA HO'OMALU O KA PAPA

STATE OF HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH
P.O. Box 3378, Room 256
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96801-3378

**WRITTEN
TESTIMONY
ONLY**

STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH
Testimony to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means
SUPPORTING HB 1830 HD2 SD1
RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

April 5, 2024 at 10:20 a.m. in CR 211 and via Video

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1st VICE CHAIRPERSON

Kathleen Merriam, LCSW CSAC

2nd VICE CHAIRPERSON

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Mary Pat Waterhouse

Kristin Will, MAEL, CSAC

Fern Yoshida

IMMEDIATE PAST

CHAIRPERSON:

Richard I. Ries PsyD, MSEd

EX-OFFICIO:

Marian Tsuji, Deputy Director
Behavioral Health Administration

WEBSITE:

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doh.hawaii.gov

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

Hawai'i law, HRS §334-10, established the State Council on Mental Health (SCMH) as a 21-member body to advise on the allocation of resources, statewide needs, and programs affecting more than one county as well as to advocate for adults with serious mental illness, children with serious emotional disturbances, individuals with mental illness or emotional problems, including those with co-occurring substance abuse disorders. Members are residents from diverse backgrounds representing mental health service providers and recipients, students and youth, parents, and family members. Members include representatives of state agencies on mental health, criminal justice, housing, Medicaid, social services, vocational rehabilitation, and education. Members include representatives from the Hawaii advisory commission on drug abuse and controlled substances and county service area boards on mental health and substance abuse.

The Hawai'i State Council on Mental Health supports HB1830 HD2 SD1. One of the most pressing issues in the field of mental health is the shortage of qualified professionals, particularly in underserved areas throughout the islands of Hawai'i. At meetings, members heard numerous reports and public statements regarding the dearth of services and providers, especially in rural areas of O'ahu and neighboring islands. By establishing provisional or associate-level licensure options, HB1830 HD2 SD1 facilitates the entry of new professionals into the workforce while ensuring that they receive appropriate supervision and support. This not only addresses the shortage of mental health providers but also enhances the quality of care by allowing new practitioners to gain valuable experience under supervision.

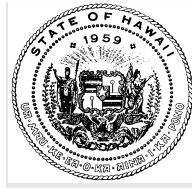
Furthermore, by authorizing insurance reimbursements for services provided by supervised mental health providers with associate licenses, barriers to entry into the mental health profession are reduced without compromising public safety and quality of services. This is particularly important in areas where there is a high demand for services but a limited number of licensed providers. HB1830 HD2 will also address numerous financial challenges commonly encountered by psychology trainees in Hawai'i as they pursue their professional development. Emerging professionals engaged in fulfilling their supervised practice hours encounter significant financial strain, largely attributed to the exceptionally high cost of living prevalent in Hawaii. Moreover, by providing the potential for financial relief and support, this proposal can enhance the retention of local talent, particularly those individuals who possess specialized training in addressing the distinctive behavioral health challenges inherent to Hawai'i 's communities.

HB1830 HD2 SD1 represents a balanced approach to addressing the challenges facing the mental health workforce. By providing a framework for associative licensing, authorizing insurance reimbursements, and funding for staff to process these applications, HB1830 HD2 SD1 ensures that individuals in Hawai'i in need of mental health services can access timely and high-quality care. We urge you to support HB1830 HD2 SD1 and help improve mental health outcomes for our communities in Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

VISION: A Hawaii where people of all ages with mental health challenges can enjoy recovery in the community of their choice.

MISSION: To advocate for a Hawaii where all persons affected by mental illness can access necessary treatment and support to live full lives in the community of their choice.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
P. O. Box 3378
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**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB1830 HD2 SD1
RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

SENATOR DONOVAN M. DELA CRUZ, CHAIR
SENATOR SHARON Y. MORIWAKI, VICE CHAIR
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Hearing Date: April 5, 2024

Room Number: 211

1 **Fiscal Implications:** Undetermined

2 **Department Position:** The Department of Health supports this measure.

3 **Department Testimony:** There is a workforce shortage of mental health providers in the
4 country and particularly in the state of Hawai'i. In 2022 it was estimated that there were 284
5 providers per 100,000 individuals with a mental health concern in the state,¹ which falls within
6 the second worst quartile compared with other states nationwide. As of November 1, 2023,
7 findings indicate that the percentage of need for mental health professionals met in Hawaii is
8 14.1%.² This data suggests a broad need for additional mental health services across the state.

9 For Hawai'i to achieve behavioral health equity, more effective systems and policies are
10 direly needed to proactively address workforce shortages of mental health providers. When
11 individuals are unable to access needed care early on, their risk increases for escalating
12 symptoms that require high-level, restrictive, intensive, and costly mental health services.

13 This bill supports the ability of graduate students who provide mental health services to
14 remain in our state and provide these much-needed services, while completing their training and

¹ Hawai'i Health Matters, Mental Health Provider Rate. Mental Health Provider Rate, 2016-2021. Published April 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.hawaiihealthmatters.org/indicators/index/view?indicatorId=319&localeId=14>

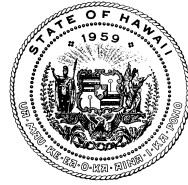
² Mental Health Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs). Published November, 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/mental-health-care-health-professional-shortage-areas-hpsas/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Percent%20of%20Need%20Met%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>

1 licensure requirements. Individuals trained at the doctoral level are difficult to recruit and retain
2 in the state. This bill provides a reasonable path, commensurate to national standards, for
3 doctoral level psychologists to obtain their license and while continuing to provide services for
4 the state. It is very clear that there is a need for additional mental health providers to support
5 vulnerable populations throughout Hawai‘i. The Department strongly supports the amendments
6 made to this measure by the Committees on Commerce and Consumer Protection and Health and
7 Human Services on March 22, 2024, which allow for psychologist license applications
8 possessing an associate psychologist provisional license to sit for their licensing exam prior to
9 completing post-doctoral license experience requirements and which allows for a waiver year
10 granted by the Board of Psychology to a psychologist that is not able to obtain licensure within
11 the statutory two-year period if it can be demonstrated that the delay was due to circumstances
12 beyond the psychologist’s control. Addressing both these issues will help to improve retention of
13 psychologists in the state.

14 This bill also addresses provisions for retaining providers trained as master’s level
15 Marriage and Family Therapists, Mental Health Counselors, and Social Workers. The provisions
16 in this bill for each of these professions, including psychologists, will help retain mental health
17 providers trained in or working in the state of Hawai‘i so that needed services can be delivered to
18 the people that need and deserve to have access to these mental health supports.

19
20 **Offered Amendments:** None.

21
22 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE
KE KE'ENA KŪPA'A MAULI OLA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
415 S. BERETANIA ST. #415
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

**Testimony of Tia L.R. Hartsock
Director, Office of Wellness and Resilience**

**House Committee on Ways and Means
Friday, April 5, 2024, 10:20 p.m., State Capitol, Conference Room 211**

H.B. No. 1830, H.D. 2, S.D. 1, Relating to Mental Health

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the Committee:

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) in the Governor's Office **SUPPORTS** H.B.1830 HD2 SD1 so long as it does not adverse impact priorities identified in the Executive Supplemental Budget Request for FY2025. The OWR also offers comments and humbly asks for the Committee's consideration to revert to the HD version of the measure.

Reflecting on the Maui Wildfires, the long-lasting effect this traumatic event has placed on the lives of our families and our communities, coupled with the preceding unresolved traumatic events like the pandemic, a new type of trauma phenomenon called cascading trauma is occurring. Prioritizing access to mental healthcare is crucial to address cascading trauma. The OWR has been at the forefront in coordinating mental health supports for survivors and the need for increased mental health access has been brought up repeatedly.

While H.B.1830 HD2 SD1 is a step forward in increasing access to mental health professionals (MHP), the HD2 version of this measure is a more robust way of addressing mental health shortages in Hawai'i since it allows those who have taken graduate level course while under supervision to be available to provide mental health supports and be reimbursed for those services. We ask for the Committee's consideration to pass the HD2 version of this measure.

Allowing provisional licensures ensures our next generation of MHPs are adequately trained and prepared to provide high-quality service, in addition to relieving potential financial burdens for them and their clinical supervisors. Trauma-informed care (TIC) is an approach to understanding and responding to the widespread impact of trauma. By passing this bill, the State would be upholding the TIC principles of Safety, Peer Support, Empowerment, and Voice and Choice, which strengthens our pathway towards a trauma-informed state. As such, the OWR supports H.B.1830 HD2 SD1.

Mahalo

Tia L R Hartsock, MSW, MSCJA
Director, Office of Wellness & Resilience
Office of the Governor



Parents And Children Together

BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIPS
THAT MATTER MOST

ParentsAndChildrenTogether.org

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1830 HD2 SD1 RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

TO: Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Moriwaki, & Members,
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
FROM: Ryan Kusumoto, President & CEO
DATE: April 5, 2024 at 10:20 AM

Parents and Children Together (PACT) supports HB 1830 HD2 SD1 Relating to Mental Health, which establishes provisional or associate-level licensure requirements for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists. This bill also clarifies the ability of a licensed social worker to bill under the supervision of a licensed clinical social worker.

Founded in 1968, PACT is a statewide community-based organization providing a wide array of innovative and educational social services to families in need. Assisting more than 15,000 people across the state annually, we help identify, address, and successfully resolve challenges through our 20 programs. Among our services are early education programs, domestic violence prevention and intervention programs, child abuse prevention and intervention programs, childhood sexual abuse supportive group services, child and adolescent behavioral health programs, sex trafficking intervention, poverty prevention and community building programs.

Several of PACT's programs provide counseling in their areas of focus and we are painfully aware of the mental health workforce shortage that is coinciding with a growing need for services. The passage of this bill will help to increase access to mental health services and decrease time spent on waiting lists when people are most in need of help. Provisional licensure can allow organizations like PACT to assist entry-level mental health professionals complete their training requirements and retain them in the local workforce while they provide competent and closely supervised clinical services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact me at (808) 847-3285 or rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org if you have any questions.

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 1:27:16 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Navarro	Testifying for Hawai'i Association for Marriage and Family Therapists	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo for your consideration for bill HB1830 authorizing associate licensure for graduates who are working and earning their 3,000 required hours of critical hands-on experience.

Modernization of Practice:

- This bill aligns Hawai'i with nearly half of all states that already have an associate/training license, modernizing our practices to meet contemporary needs.

Access to Quality, Local-Kine Care:

- Current provider-to-patient ratios in Hawai'i show a stark need for more mental health professionals.
- And even if we improved provider-to-patient ratios by importing therapists from the continent, Hawai'i Island's better ratios but poor health outcomes and factors indicates a gap in care utilization.
- Local examples, like the tragedy in Lahaina, underscore the need for culturally responsive, local mental health providers.
- NAMI's recommendations highlight the importance of culturally responsive care, which this bill supports by growing local professionals

Mechanism of Accountability:

- Interim licensing helps ensure that pre-licensed therapists adhere to professional standards and complete their licensure hours effectively.
- This process also promotes better supervision and mentoring, vital for quality mental health care.

Combating Brain Drain:

- Keeping our talented mental health professionals in Hawai'i is crucial. This bill can help reduce the brain drain that our state is currently experiencing.
- Local upbringing often translates to a higher likelihood of professionals staying or returning to Hawai'i, vital for maintaining a diverse and culturally aware workforce.

Economic Impact:

- Employing local providers keeps money within the community, supporting our economy.
- Importing providers does not address the unique economic and cultural dynamics of Hawai'i.

Challenging the Status Quo:

- The current expectation for therapists to work extensive unpaid hours post-degree is discriminatory and unsustainable, especially in Hawai'i's economic climate.
- This bill addresses these barriers, making the profession more accessible and equitable.



HB1830 HD2 SD1 Provisional Licensure for Mental Health

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair

Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Friday, Apr 5, 2024: 10:20 : Room 211 Videoconference

Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition supports HB1830 HD2 SD1:

ALOHA CHAIRS, VICE CHAIRS, AND DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS. My name is Alan Johnson. I am the current chair of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition (HSAC), a statewide organization for substance use disorder and co-occurring mental health disorder treatment and prevention agencies and recovery-oriented services.

HSAC defers to the legislature for amendments regarding **educational and associate status requirements as well as timing** for applicants completing their PhD, or licensure for marriage and family or licensure for mental health counselor.

Having an associate licensing structure makes sense given the **workforce shortage** that **will only get worse over the next decade**. While the behavioral health workforce is shrinking, the percentage of Americans with chronic illness is rising to about 50%, with depression now becoming the number one behavioral health disability in the U.S. Adding to this trend, many people are suffering from the lingering effects of the pandemic as well as the emotional trauma of the wildfire disaster.

Our community needs more support in behavioral health in all areas, especially in underserved rural areas.

1. We must increase access to critical mental health services.
2. Service **must include co-occurring disorders (substance use disorders and mental health conditions)**.
3. We must rise above limiting stigma because we have the behavioral technology to effectively address trauma and how it manifests in behavioral health conditions.
4. If we just had more workforce.

We appreciate this bill to increase our workforce development because providers, and the community we serve, are in dire need of more help.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony.

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 3:26:02 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeremy M Kalan	Testifying for Center for Healing & Transformation	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB1830, a necessary measure to help to meet the tremendous demand for mental health care in Hawai'i. Right now, there are thousands of people in Hawaii living their lives with trauma stuck in their bodies, in emotional, mental, physical and spiritual pain. They are sitting on wait lists suffering because we do not have enough mental health providers in our state. We have many providers that have graduated from Masters and Doctoral programs who could be a lifeline for these people in dire need. Half of the states in this country already have an Associate Licensing track in place and it works very well.

As an owner of a mental health private practice, I know firsthand how difficult it is for us to hire mental health providers to meet the needs of our islands. Passing this bill will help tremendously to ease the suffering and help thousands of people to heal and to grow.

I urge you to pass this bill

Mahalo for your leadership,

Jeremy Kalan, CEO & Co-Owner of Center for Healing & Transformation

Testimony of the Board of Psychology

**Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Friday, April 5, 2024
10:20 a.m.**

Conference Room 211 and Videoconference

**On the following measure:
H.B. 1830, H.D. 2, S.D. 1, RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

My name is Christopher Fernandez, and I am the Executive Officer of the Board of Psychology (Board). The Board supports the intent of and offers comments on this bill.

The purposes of this bill are to: (1) establish provisional or associate-level licensure requirements for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists and authorize insurance reimbursements in certain circumstances; (2) authorize psychologist license applicants that possess a provisional license to sit for the licensing examination before completing certain supervised experience requirements; (3) authorize insurance reimbursements for services provided by a supervised social worker intern in certain circumstances; and (4) appropriate funds.

The Board appreciates the incorporation of several of its requested amendments in the current draft of this measure. The Board continues to support the delayed implementation date of July 1, 2026, and acknowledges the appropriations request by the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs and its Professional Vocational Licensing Division (Division) as essential to the successful development and implementation of the new licenses. If passed, this bill will require the development and administration of at least four (4) new license operations, which will require initial time and funds for program development, changes to the Division's database, and to hire and train additional staff to ensure the successful implementation of these new license-types in Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2024 12:02:32 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erin Gustin	Testifying for Pau Hana Counseling, LLC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings, my name is Dr. Erin Gustin, MA, PsyD and I am a licensed clinical psychologist and the founder and owner of one of Hawai'i's largest mental health counseling centers, Pau Hana Counseling, LLC. We currently employ 40 therapists and serve almost 2000 residents of Hawai'i. I am writing in strong support of this bill being passed. The current state of mental health services on this island is untenable. We turn away hundreds of Hawai'i residents every month who desperately need mental health services due to lack of availability of licensed clinicians. And yet, we have half a dozen associate therapists email us every month, trying to get jobs as therapists to help Hawai'i residents. There is a huge disconnect between services needed vs our ability to provide them. As a large counseling organization, who has been dedicated to serving the Hawaiian islands for almost 10 years, in the current state of affairs, we are left with two choices, either to not pay our associate counselors for the hard work they do, or to force clients to pay cash for the intern services. Many of these Hawai'i residents that we are asking to pay cash have great insurance that they pay a lot of money for that they really want to use for services, and we end up turning a great deal of people away that desperately need help because of this reason. Passing this bill would greatly improve the accessibility of mental health services to our Hawai'i residents. We would be able to pay associates for their services, and allow residents to use their insurance for services. Cash pay is not sustainable long term for many of our residents, and thus we end up not really serving their needs. As a counseling center, we take almost nothing from these cash pay clients for them to be able to receive services and to make sure that our associates get paid and complete their hours necessary to become licensed therapists. With rising prices of everything in Hawai'i, it is becoming more and more difficult to live here, and most associate therapists cannot provide services and get their hours without some sort of stipend. If this bill were passed, it would link the need for services with the need for insurance reimbursements that is desperately needed for us therapists to continue to provide mental health services to our residents.



Subject: HB1830 HD2 SD1-- Support

To the Honorable Committee Members

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB1830 HD2 SD1. The Hawai'i Counselors Association (HCA) Executive Board and members support HB1830 HD2 SD1. HCA currently has over 100 members who provide mental health counseling and related services to the community or are enrolled in graduate programs. Almost a third of our members are graduate students who would benefit directly from the passing of HB1830 HD2 SD1. This does not include recent graduates who are currently working on their post-graduate experience. The HCA Executive Board and the majority of members (who have provided feedback) expressed strong support for associate licensure for mental health professionals. We feel strongly that this bill would open opportunities for graduates of mental health-related programs to enter the field while increasing access to mental health services in our communities, particularly underserved populations. These benefits are seen in over 20 other states that have already established associate-level licensure for mental health professionals.

HB1830 HD2 SD1 will expand the quality of mental health services by allowing provisional/associate-level licensure for mental health practitioners. The intent is to create an associate license option for qualified candidates, not require associate licensure to obtain full licensure. Hawaii currently has a shortage of licensed mental health professionals, and many providers have waitlists. HB1830 HD2 SD1 will help to address the shortage of mental health providers in Hawaii by allowing graduate-level mental health professionals to enter the field at an associate level, thus increasing the number of qualified professionals in the mental health field. It will also create a career pathway for graduates of mental health-related programs, including social work, mental health and professional counseling, marriage and family therapy, and clinical psychology.

Additionally, the HCA Executive Board offers comments in acknowledgment and support of the requests from the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA) to fund necessary personnel and improvements to database infrastructure, which are crucial to the implementation of this bill. Funding to the DCCA is essential to carry out associate licensure and advancements in the mental health profession. Investing in the DCCA and the Hawai'i licensing system will go a long way in the implementation of improvements in professional services across the State.

Overall, HB1830 HD2 SD1 will create more job opportunities for pre-license mental health professionals while also addressing the need for more providers and improving access to services.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB1830 HD2 SD1.

Sincerely,

Christine M Park, PhD, LMHC, REAT, NCC
President, Hawai'i Counselors Association

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Senator M. Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair

Senator Sharon Moriwaki, Vice Chair

April 5, 2024 10:20 A.M. Conf Rm 211 & via Video conference

Testimony in Strong Support for HB1830 HD1 RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

The National Association of Social Workers – Hawai'i (NASW- HI) strongly supports HB1830 HD2 SD1 Relating to Mental Health, which establishes Provisional/Associate level licenses for Psychologists, Mental Health Counselors, and Marriage and Family Therapists; and clarifies the ability of a Licensed Social Worker to bill under the supervision of a Licensed Clinical Social Worker.

This bill does several important things. It creates an Associate level of Licensure for Psychologists, Mental Health Counselors, and Marriage and Family Therapists, based on the current LSW level of licensure for social workers, which will allow for a mechanism by which clinicians who have completed their graduate school courses can be compensated while they are receiving their required period of supervised practice.

It also clarifies that a LSW social worker can bill insurance under the clinical license of a supervising LCSW.

These steps will create the opportunity to open up more clinicians in supervision to see clients in the very near future, which is vital given the ongoing stressors resulting from Maui Fires, as well as the pandemic; and will immediately address the current shortage of *clinical*-level mental health providers, and long wait times to get in to therapy as a client.

It also opens the door to more diverse candidates in the field of mental health. Few people can afford to work for two years either unpaid or underpaid, as they complete their clinical supervision, which leads to an overrepresentation in our profession of people from affluent backgrounds and an underrepresentation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in the fields of Social Work, Psychology, Mental Health Counseling, and Marriage and Family Therapy.

This bill can help encourage people who have completed their graduate education in Hawai'i to stay and work here, if they can receive a living wage. We strive to educate students in cultural competency and the importance of understanding the community in which they practice, to create clinicians who will thrive here, then do very little to help keep them in state, after graduation.

It also provides the opportunity for those in supervision to get experience working in private practices and doing more direct therapy, under supervision, which serves to strengthen them as clinicians when they reach the level of independent practice.

FINER DETAILS

As time is of the essence, we encourage this committee to pass this bill unamended; but wish to include, for the record, notes on matters the conference committee may want to refine. (Page and line number references and suggested language is available in our previous testimony in CPN/HHS.). These refinements would:

- CLARIFY REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS FOR SUPERVISED LSWs SEEKING LICENSURE AS LCSW.
- CLARIFY WHETHER THE TERM “INTERN” REFERS TO STUDENTS OR TRAINEES - AS THERE IS CONFUSION AND INCONSISTENCY ACROSS STATUTES.
- ENSURE THAT THE LICENSE EXEMPTION LANGUAGE DOES NOT EXCLUDE TRAINEES WHILE THEY ARE WAITING FOR THE DCCA TO STAND UP THE PROGRAM AND IS READY TO ISSUE PROVISIONAL/ASSOCIATE LICENSES – PERHAPS USING THE AUTHORITY OUTLINED IN HRS 436B-7(2) ON “CONDITIONAL LICENSES”.
- CLARIFY THAT COMPLIANCE RESOLUTION FUNDS (CRF) AND THE RESPECTIVE CRF SUB-ACCOUNTS FOR EACH OF THE PROFESSIONS’ LICENSING PROGRAMS CAN BE USED FOR ADMINISTRATION. ([Hawaii Insurer’s Council v. Lingle](#).¹)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this important bill.

Sincerely,

 , MSW, LCSW

Sonja Bigalke-Bannan, MSW, LCSW
Executive Director, National Association of Social Workers- Hawai’i Chapter

¹ See Hawaii Insurers Council v. Lingle for a comprehensive discussion of the CRF <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/hi-supreme-court/1256613.html>



Hawai'i Psychological Association

For a Healthy Hawai'i

P.O. Box 833
Honolulu, HI 96808

www.hawaiiopsychology.org

Phone: (808) 521-8995

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Moriwaki, Vice Chair

April 5, 2024 10:20 A.M. Conf Room 211 & via Video conference

Testimony in Strong Support on HB1830 HD2 SD1 RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

(HPA) **strongly supports HB1830 HD2 SD1** - as a critical tool in meeting the burgeoning demand for quality mental health services – which is especially timely as the emotional and mental toll of the Maui Fires, as well as the lingering effects of the pandemic and associated hardships continue to be felt by all our residents, prolonged now for several years. These events have exacerbated the chronic shortage of mental health providers in Hawaii.

Of 37 states recently surveyed, 21 already have a licensing structure for Associate-level Psychologists in place.

To become licensed as a psychologist, Hawaii Revised Statutes requires candidates to have completed a doctoral degree (Ph.D. or Psy.D.) in psychology, including practicum experience comprised of a full time one-year psychology internship; followed by at least one year of supervised practice experience after completing the degree; and then a passing score on a rigorous national examination. This measure will allow them to receive insurance reimbursement with a Provisional/Associate license for their post-doctoral/pre-licensed services.

WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FROM GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Not only is this measure a part of the House Majority Package, multiple state agencies have testified in support over the last three years, including: the Department of Health; the Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation; the State Office of Wellness & Resilience; the Disability & Communications Access Board; and the State Council on Mental Health.

These agencies understand the tremendous leverage and impact this bill will achieve in addressing our mental health crisis by significantly multiplying Hawaii's mental health workforce with a **pipeline of homegrown talent** – keeping them from moving to the mainland where there is more flexibility in taking exams, more paying opportunities enabled by other states' Provisional/Associate Licensing programs, and a much cheaper cost of living. All done simply with applicants' license fees to DCCA's Compliance Resolution Fund (CRF)¹.

¹ See Hawaii Insurers Council v. Lingle for a comprehensive discussion of the CRF <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/hi-supreme-court/1256613.html>

FINER DETAILS

As time is of the essence, we encourage this committee to pass this bill unamended; but wish to include, for the record, notes on matters the conference committee may want to refine. (Page and line number references and suggested language is available in our previous testimony in CPN/HHS.). These refinements would:

ENSURE THAT THE LICENSE EXEMPTION LANGUAGE DOES NOT EXCLUDE TRAINEES WHILE THEY ARE WAITING FOR THE DCCA TO STAND UP THE PROGRAM AND IS READY TO ISSUE PROVISIONAL/ASSOCIATE LICENSES – PERHAPS USING THE AUTHORITY OUTLINED IN HRS 436B-7(2) ON “CONDITIONAL LICENSES”.

CLARIFY THAT COMPLIANCE RESOLUTION FUNDS (CRF) AND THE RESPECTIVE CRF SUB-ACCOUNTS FOR EACH OF THE PROFESSIONS’ LICENSING PROGRAMS CAN BE USED FOR ADMINISTRATION. ([Hawaii Insurer’s Council v. Lingle.¹](#))

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this important bill.

Sincerely,



Raymond A Folen, Ph.D., ABPP.
Executive Director



To: The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Paula Arcena, External Affairs Vice President
Mike Nguyen, Public Policy Manager

Hearing: Friday, April 5, 2024, 10:20 AM, Conference Room 211

RE: **HB1830 HB2 SD1 Relating to Mental Health**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HB1830 HB2 SD1**. This measure establishes provisional or associate-level licensure requirements for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists and authorizes insurance reimbursements in certain circumstances; authorizes psychologist license applicants that possess a provisional license to sit for the licensing examination before completing certain supervised experience requirements; and authorizes insurance reimbursements for services provided by a supervised social work intern in certain circumstances.

Founded in 1994 by Hawai'i's community health centers, AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan serving over 84,000 Medicaid and dual-eligible health plan members on all islands. Approximately 40 percent of our members are keiki. We are Hawai'i's only health plan exclusively dedicated to serving Medicaid and Medicaid-Medicare dually-eligible beneficiaries. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for access to quality, whole-person care for all.

Hawai'i's high demand for mental health services, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the devastation from the August 2023 fires, have highlighted our State's dire shortage of mental health professionals. The shortage most severely impacts our most vulnerable residents, Medicaid beneficiaries, and those who live in rural communities. A lack of timely access to mental health treatment can have devastating consequences on our residents.

This measure expands access to quality mental health services by addressing licensing and reimbursement limitations as well as helping to relieve the financial burden on aspiring mental health professionals. We support this measure to increase the number of local practitioners in the workforce needed to meet the demand of our community.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support of HB1830 HB2 SD1**.



Strong Support for [Associate Licensing bill \(HB1830\)](#)- Relating to Mental Health

Aloha Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee

My name is Melissa Bartholomew and I am a Licensed Mental Health Counselor in Hawai'i as well as the Founder and Owner for the Mental Health Group Practice, Brighter Bound in Hilo, HI. I am writing to express my strong support for HB1830, which seeks to establish provisional or associate level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i. As a Licensed Mental Health Counselor and Private Group Practice owner I have witnessed firsthand the high need of individuals seeking mental health care and challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field.

Upon entering private practice, I had a full caseload within several months due to the high demand of those seeking mental health counseling. All of the therapists at my practice also have full caseloads almost immediately after starting as well. It is very difficult to keep up with the demand of clients that need to be seen. It is not uncommon that prospect clients tell me that they have already called 10 other therapists that are all full. Or, that they have called 5+ people without anyone returning their call. Most people want to utilize their insurance to pay for mental health counseling. Without their insurance, the average counseling session costs around \$125 in our state, which most people cannot afford.

The pre-licensed professionals face many challenges on the path towards licensure which include: obtaining experience, training, and supervision. Many are seeking work, however due to the lack of insurance reimbursement it is difficult for companies to hire them. In my small practice we can only take 1-2 pre-licensed people on at a time as a way to "give back to the field and help our community." It costs us money to train and help the pre-licensed individuals and I can see why most businesses are not able to help these individuals obtain licensure. In addition to this, the pre-licensed individuals often also have to work full time jobs elsewhere to cover themselves financially while they are working towards licensure; the high work hours and nature of the work can lead to burnout before licensure is obtained.

HB1830 addresses these crucial issues by:

1. Helps address the shortage of qualified mental health professionals in Hawai'i.
2. Helps community members get affordable healthcare when they need it.
3. Reduces the risk of burnout for mental healthcare professionals by making the path to licensure more obtainable.

4. Allowing a pathway for pre-licensed professionals to accept insurance which is crucial to the items listed above.

5. Improving Hawaii's Economy

6. Preventing "Brain Drain" of our local talent to the continent

I firmly believe that the passage of HB1830 will be a significant step forward in addressing the mental health concerns in Hawai'i. I look forward to a day in Hawai'i where I don't have to put someone on a waiting list, or "wish them the best " in finding a counselor when they need the help now. I hope that you will not only pass this bill but also rush it to be passed as soon as possible. This will not only have an immediate positive impact on our communities but also benefit the mental health professionals as well. Thank you for considering my testimony in support of this vital piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa Bartholomew". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Melissa Bartholomew, LMHC
Founder and Owner of Brighter Bound

Email: mel@brighterbound.com

Phone: 808-212-9687

Fax: 808-427-9891

www.brighterbound.com



The Hawaiian Islands Association
for Marriage and Family Therapy
(HIAMFT)

We know systems.
We know relationships.
We know FAMILY MATTERS.

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator M. Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Moriwaki, Vice Chair

April 5, 2024 10:20 A.M. Conf Rm 211 & via Video conference

Testimony in Strong Support on HB1830 HD2 SD1 RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

The Hawaiian Islands Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (HIAMFT) strongly supports **HB1830 HD2 SD1** as a critical tool in improving access and meeting the overwhelming demand for quality mental health services, particularly during and following the prolonged pandemic.

FINER DETAILS

As time is of the essence, we encourage this committee to pass this bill unamended; but wish to include, for the record, notes on matters the conference committee may want to refine. (Page and line number references and suggested language is available in our previous testimony in CPN/HHS.). These refinements would:

- ENSURE THAT THE LICENSE EXEMPTION LANGUAGE DOES NOT EXCLUDE TRAINEES WHILE THEY ARE WAITING FOR THE DCCA TO STAND UP THE PROGRAM AND IS READY TO ISSUE PROVISIONAL/ASSOCIATE LICENSES – PERHAPS USING THE AUTHORITY OUTLINED IN HRS 436B-7(2) ON “CONDITIONAL LICENSES”.
- CLARIFY THAT COMPLIANCE RESOLUTION FUNDS (CRF) AND THE RESPECTIVE CRF SUB-ACCOUNTS FOR EACH OF THE PROFESSIONS’ LICENSING PROGRAMS CAN BE USED FOR ADMINISTRATION. ([Hawaii Insurer’s Council v. Lingle.¹](#))

BACKGROUND:

Here’s a snapshot of recently recorded ratios of clients/patients to mental health providers in Hawai’i:

Hawai’i 320:1

Honolulu 370:1

Kauai 480:1

Maui 550:1

Moloka’i has no registered providers.

Obviously, this demand far exceeds the viable supply of mental health providers. Among other provisions to remove administrative barriers and increase the speed with which trained and qualified practitioners can enter the workforce, HB1830 HD2 would establish provisional/associate-level licensure requirements for Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs),

Mental Health Counselors, and Psychologists. This would ensure a regulatory framework that would encourage relevant and quality training to associate-level providers by authorizing insurance reimbursement for supervised care provided by these post-degree/pre-licensed mental health professionals during the 12 to 24-month period in which they are completing required supervised practice hours under the mentorship and guidance of an independently licensed mental health professional.

In 23 other states, associate-level licensure is already established as common practice. This regulatory approach not only expands clients' access to providers, it also creates a viable career path for would-be providers: Hawai'i residents interested in pursuing careers as mental health professionals (of which there is a 10,000-15,000 shortage), but who might otherwise not be able to actualize such a career due to outdated statutes that often force post-graduate/pre-licensed providers to work for sub-par wages or even pro bono (while also paying a supervisor to oversee their work, costing MFT supervisees anywhere from \$10,000-\$30,000 for 1,000 hours of supervised direct care during their 2-year post-degree period) and/or in contexts that do not provide sufficiently relevant clinical experience (e.g., prisons, substance abuse centers, case management, etc.) to ensure providers are ready for independent licensure.

This bill would update Hawai'i's licensing statutes in ways that would not only modernize our processes, but ultimately improve the quality and utilization of mental health care provided in our state by creating a more robust system of clinical accountability/training and a financially viable career path for local would-be providers who have a deep understanding of local cultures/customs and who in turn, may be better able to connect with clients, who in turn will be more likely to actually utilize available mental health services.

Moreover, this bill will reduce the loss of potential future mental health professionals to other careers or one of the other 23 states that have already modernized their licensing laws. In turn, this will contribute to the state economy through associate licensing fees, taxes from wages earned by associate-level licensees, and local purchases made by these licensees.

Overall, many aspects of our mental health system are deeply flawed, understaffed, and are in no way prepared to manage the onslaught of mental health issues that the general population are experiencing during and after the pandemic, as well as in response to the Maui Wildfires. The consequences of these events, both short- and long-term, in terms of mental health, could be significant and could weaken the Hawai'i health care system.

If we don't develop the means to stave off and/or treat these mental health issues, individuals and families will suffer even more than they already have/do. In all areas of life, untreated mental health issues can become chronic and with crippling, long-term effects – for individuals, families, and communities.

Circumstances call for a change in the paradigm and practices of mental health care in Hawai'i. Our current model of mental health care fails to address the complex challenges of modern living. Let's re-vision current models of mental health care delivery by learning from other states and being creative and flexible in how we provide mental health services. To protect our community now and in the future, let's take appropriate action now. Mental health should not be an afterthought.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in strong support of this bill.

Sincerely,

Mary A Navarro

Mary A. Navarro, MA, LMFT, President
The Hawaiian Islands Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 11:40:22 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tatum Marcus, LMFT	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Written Testimony in Support of HB1830

To the Honorable Committee Members

Re: Strong Support for HB1830 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

Aloha Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB1830, a crucial measure for the advancement of mental health care in our beloved state of Hawai'i.

HB1830 represents a significant step forward in addressing the growing need for accessible and quality mental health services in Hawai'i. By establishing provisional or associate-level licensure for mental health professionals, this bill not only broadens the scope of available care but also supports the development of a robust, culturally competent, and local mental health workforce.

As someone who has witnessed firsthand the challenges in accessing locally based mental health care, I can attest to the profound impact that HB1830 will have in bridging these gaps, enhancing the availability of culturally sensitive and community-centric services, and ultimately fostering a more resilient and mentally healthy Hawai'i.

HB1830 addresses these challenges by:

- Facilitating the entry of qualified professionals into the mental health field.
- Enhancing the cultural competency and relevance of mental health services through local training.
- Ensuring that insurance reimbursements include services provided by associate-level professionals, thereby increasing affordability and accessibility for patients.
- Preventing “Brain Drain” of our local talent to the continent
- Improving Hawai’i’s economy

I urge the committee to pass HB1830, not only as a legislative action but as a commitment to the health and well-being of our communities across Hawai’i. This bill is more than just a policy; it's a lifeline to many who are in dire need of compassionate and competent mental health care.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I am hopeful that with your support, HB1830 will pave the way for a healthier, more resilient Hawai’i.

Mahalo for your time and attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Tatum Marcus, LMFT

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 11:56:02 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Dugal	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Written Testimony in Support of HB1830

To the Honorable Committee Members

Re: Strong Support for HB1830 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

Aloha Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB1830, a crucial measure for the advancement of mental health care in our beloved state of Hawai'i.

HB1830 represents a significant step forward in addressing the growing need for accessible and quality mental health services in Hawai'i. By establishing provisional or associate-level licensure for mental health professionals, this bill not only broadens the scope of available care but also supports the development of a robust, culturally competent, and local mental health workforce.

As someone who has witnessed firsthand the challenges in accessing locally based mental health care, I can attest to the profound impact that HB1830 will have in bridging these gaps, enhancing the availability of culturally sensitive and community-centric services, and ultimately fostering a more resilient and mentally healthy Hawai'i.

HB1830 addresses these challenges by:

- Facilitating the entry of qualified professionals into the mental health field.
- Enhancing the cultural competency and relevance of mental health services through local training.
- Ensuring that insurance reimbursements include services provided by associate-level professionals, thereby increasing affordability and accessibility for patients.
- Preventing “Brain Drain” of our local talent to the continent
- Improving Hawai’i’s economy

I urge the committee to pass HB1830, not only as a legislative action but as a commitment to the health and well-being of our communities across Hawai’i. This bill is more than just a policy; it's a lifeline to many who are in dire need of compassionate and competent mental health care.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I am hopeful that with your support, HB1830 will pave the way for a healthier, more resilient Hawai’i.

Mahalo for your time and attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Dr. Mike Dugal, PhD

Aiea, HI

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 12:17:35 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anthony Papa, Ph.D.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support for HB1830 – Establishing Associate Licensure for Mental Health Professionals

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 1830, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

As the director of the clinical psychology Ph.D. program at UH Mānoa, I have first-hand experience with the barriers that recent graduates from our program have in establishing themselves professionally in the State of Hawai'i. One of the largest barriers is completing one year of post-degree clinical practice under the supervision of a licensed psychologist before they can qualify for licensure and independent practice.

Because Hawai'i does not offer provisional licensure for these early career psychologists, there is no pathway for the services that they provide to be billed to insurance companies. Thus, providing opportunities to accumulate these supervised hours for licensure is an often unaffordable financial drain on agencies and practices that could otherwise provide these opportunities. It leaves many of these budding professionals having to work pro bono, at much reduced salaries, or even at times having to pay potential supervisors out of their pocket to get the supervised hours necessary to begin independent professional practice. Moreover, because this is a post-degree requirement and they are no longer students, they do not have access to any educational financial support.

Needless to say, this represents a substantial barrier to any but those who have substantial financial resources available. Because of this barrier, many states have instituted provisional licensure for these emerging professionals to help fix this financial conundrum. This is particularly relevant for Hawai'i because of the high cost of living, many of our students cannot afford to stay and go to other states to practice professionally contributing significantly to the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities.

I firmly believe that the passage of HB1830 will be a significant step forward in enhancing the mental health landscape of Hawai'i by providing a pathway for recent graduates who were trained to address the specific mental health needs of our communities to stay in Hawai'i and

thus addressing the shortage of qualified mental health professionals in Hawai'i, increasing access to mental health care, and increasing the well-being of our communities.

Thank you for considering my testimony in support of this vital piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Anthony Papa, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Director of Clinical Training, Clinical Studies Program, Department of Psychology, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

TO: Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection & Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Amber Drake
Clinical Mental Health Counseling Graduate Student,
University of Hawaii at Hilo

RE: HB1830 ESTABLISHING ASSOCIATE LICENSURE FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

POSITION: In support of HB1830

Aloha Honorable Members of the Hawaii Legislature,

I am writing to express my support for HB1830, which aims to provide provisional or associate-level licensure requirements for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists and authorizes insurance reimbursements in certain circumstances. I am a graduate student at the University of Hawaii at Hilo studying Clinical Mental Health Counseling and this bill would have a direct positive impact on my future career as a mental health counselor.

This legislation is vital for enhancing access to mental health services and would help ensure the professional development and support of our community. As I am learning more about the field within my graduate program, I have become more aware of the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. We have a growing need for more mental health professionals statewide, but especially for our community in Maui after the Lahaina fires.

Furthermore, HB1830 will help address these crucial issues by creating pathways for emerging professionals and enhance accessibility to mental health services. By establishing associate licensure, this bill provides an essential steppingstone for recent graduates and those entering the mental health field. This not only aids in their professional development but also helps in addressing the shortage of qualified mental health professionals in Hawai'i. The bill's provision for insurance reimbursements for services rendered by provisional or associate level professionals will make mental health care more affordable and accessible to a broader segment of our population. Nearly half of the states in America already have this program in place, and by passing this bill, Hawaii will be modernizing our practices to meet our contemporary needs.

Our community needs culturally responsive, local mental health providers, so as a state we need to incentivize providers to stay here and practice here. It is crucial to keep our talented mental health professionals in Hawai'i. This has become more apparent after the Lahaina fires, with many people coming from the mainland attempting to provide mental health services to survivors. Though these clinicians have good intentions, they are not multiculturally competent enough for our community's needs. Though I am submitting testimony as an individual, I also sit on the State Board of Directors for NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) and I know that NAMI emphasizes the importance of culturally responsive care, which this bill supports by growing local professionals. This process will help ensure pre-licensed therapists adhere to

professional standards and complete their licensure hours effectively, and would promote better supervision and mentoring, all of which are vital for quality mental health care.

The current expectation for therapists to work extensive unpaid hours post-degree is discriminatory and unsustainable, especially in Hawai'i's economic climate. As a Lahaina fire survivor, I am worried how I will be able to make it financially after I graduate if I must work extensive unpaid hours. Affordable housing is difficult to come by in Maui, and many of us who lost everything in the fire are having a hard time financially with additional unexpected expenses associated with rebuilding. I am not the only aspiring mental health professional that is facing these unforeseen challenges. We need to be creative, follow the example of other states who have passed similar legislation and do our best to help improve the mental health of our state. HB1830 will help people like me, so that I can in turn, help our community.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. We understand the urgency of this request and appreciate your swift action to support this crucial legislation. I respectfully urge you to vote in favor of HB1830 and help mental health professionals enhance our mental health treatment in Hawaii. Your efforts play a significant role in shaping the future of mental health care in Hawaii.

Sincerely,

Amber Drake
MA Candidate in Clinical Mental Health Counseling
University of Hawaii at Hilo
NAMI Hawaii State Board of Directors

108 E Huapala Place,
Lahaina, HI 96761
Adrake8@hawaii.edu
amber@namihawaii.org
801-361-1791

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 1:02:54 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
René Harvey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Written Testimony in Support of HB1830

To the Honorable Committee Members

Re: Strong Support for HB1830 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

Aloha Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB1830, a crucial measure for the advancement of mental health care in our beloved state of Hawai'i.

HB1830 represents a significant step forward in addressing the growing need for accessible and quality mental health services in Hawai'i. By establishing provisional or associate-level licensure for mental health professionals, this bill not only broadens the scope of available care but also supports the development of a robust, culturally competent, and local mental health workforce.

As someone who has witnessed firsthand the challenges in accessing locally based mental health care, I can attest to the profound impact that HB1830 will have in bridging these gaps, enhancing the availability of culturally sensitive and community-centric services, and ultimately fostering a more resilient and mentally healthy Hawai'i.

HB1830 addresses these challenges by:

- Facilitating the entry of qualified professionals into the mental health field.
- Enhancing the cultural competency and relevance of mental health services through local training.
- Ensuring that insurance reimbursements include services provided by associate-level professionals, thereby increasing affordability and accessibility for patients.
- Preventing “Brain Drain” of our local talent to the continent
- Improving Hawai’i’s economy

I urge the committee to pass HB1830, not only as a legislative action but as a commitment to the health and well-being of our communities across Hawai’i. This bill is more than just a policy; it's a lifeline to many who are in dire need of compassionate and competent mental health care.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I am hopeful that with your support, HB1830 will pave the way for a healthier, more resilient Hawai’i.

Mahalo for your time and attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,
Rene Harvey

Behavioral Health Specialist (Maui DOE)

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 1:17:22 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alan R. Spector, LCSW	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill and ask you to vote yes on it. This bill will help to address Hawaii's shortage of mental health professionals.

Alan R. Spector, LCSW

Kaneohe, HI

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 1:42:08 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nirit Stephens	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the Honorable Committee Members

Re: Strong Support for HB1830 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

Aloha Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB1830, a crucial measure for the advancement of mental health care in our beloved state of Hawai'i.

HB1830 in my opinion, can address the urgent need for accessible, high quality mental health services in Hawai'i. By having an associate-level licensure for mental health professionals, this bill also supports the development of a culturally competent and local mental health workforce.

As case manager and a therapy intern at Child and Family Services in Hilo, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges in accessing locally based mental health care. I can therefore attest to the huge impact that HB1830 will have on the availability of culturally sensitive and community-centric services, which will ultimately foster a more resilient and mentally healthy Hawai'i.

HB1830 addresses these challenges by:

- Facilitating the entry of qualified professionals into the mental health field.
- Enhancing the cultural competency and relevance of mental health services through local training.

- Ensuring that insurance reimbursements include services provided by associate-level professionals, thereby increasing affordability and accessibility for patients.
- Preventing “Brain Drain” of our local talent to the continent
- Improving Hawai’i’s economy

I urge the committee to pass HB1830, not only as a legislative action but as a commitment to the health and well-being of our communities across Hawai’i. This bill is more than just a policy; it's a lifeline to many who are in dire need of compassionate and competent mental health care.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I am hopeful that with your support, HB1830 will pave the way for a healthier, more resilient Hawai’i.

Mahalo for your time and attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Nirit Stephens

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 1:59:52 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Britt Young	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB1830, a crucial measure for the advancement of mental health care in our beloved state of Hawai'i.

HB1830 represents a significant step forward in addressing the growing need for accessible and quality mental health services in Hawai'i. By establishing provisional or associate-level licensure for mental health professionals, this bill not only broadens the scope of available care but also supports the development of a robust, culturally competent, and local mental health workforce.

As someone who has witnessed firsthand the challenges in accessing locally based mental health care, I can attest to the profound impact that HB1830 will have in bridging these gaps, enhancing the availability of culturally sensitive and community-centric services, and ultimately fostering a more resilient and mentally healthy Hawai'i.

HB1830 addresses these challenges by:

- Facilitating the entry of qualified professionals into the mental health field.
- Enhancing the cultural competency and relevance of mental health services through local training.
- Ensuring that insurance reimbursements include services provided by associate-level professionals, thereby increasing affordability and accessibility for patients.
- Preventing "Brain Drain" of our local talent to the continent
- Improving Hawai'i's economy

I urge the committee to pass HB1830, not only as a legislative action but as a commitment to the health and well-being of our communities across Hawai'i. This bill is more than just a policy; it's a lifeline to many who are in dire need of compassionate and competent mental health care.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I am hopeful that with your support, HB1830 will pave the way for a healthier, more resilient Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your time and attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Britt Young, M.A., LMFT

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 2:52:32 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Betlach	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It is very important that provisional licenses , not be limited in their scope while under supervision for insurance billing .

as the chair of the hawaii area service board for the state I have had reported many times to our board the studies, and testimony of many individuals that are or where unable to get services due to lack of professionals available . This may mean that limiting coverage of insurance for services to a few exceptions could remove services for many altogether in Hawaii. Please be careful to not neuter the bill

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 3:37:15 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tiffany	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to wholeheartedly endorse HB1830 HD2 SD1, a pivotal initiative aimed at establishing provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

As someone currently navigating the challenges of being an "Intern MFT" in the State of Hawai'i, I intimately understand the hurdles faced by emerging professionals in our field due to the absence of an associate license, a support system that many other states have successfully implemented. The limitations imposed by our current status not only hinder our ability to be reimbursed for services but also place us under significant duress, reducing the time we can dedicate to serving our communities.

The absence of an associate license compels emerging professionals like myself to seek alternative income sources to sustain a living in Hawai'i, creating an additional layer of complexity. This reality underscores the urgency of HB1830 HD2 SD1, as it addresses a crucial need for financial stability while simultaneously fostering a conducive environment for emerging professionals to serve their communities effectively.

Moreover, the bill is a beacon of hope for those of us who have faced challenges in finding employment that aligns with our field of expertise, hindering our readiness for licensure. HB 1830 HD2 SD1 is not just a piece of legislation; it's a catalyst for closing the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities.

I urge you to consider the significant positive impact HB1830 HD2 SD1 can have on the mental health landscape in Hawai'i and support its swift passage.

- **Modernization of Practice:**
- This bill aligns Hawai'i with nearly half of all states that already have an associate/training license, modernizing our practices to meet contemporary needs.

· **Access to Quality, Local-Kine Care:**

- Current provider-to-patient ratios in Hawai'i show a stark need for more mental health professionals.

- And even if we improved provider-to-patient ratios by importing therapists from the continent, Hawai'i Island's better ratios but poor health outcomes and factors indicates a gap in care utilization.
- Local examples, like the tragedy in Lahaina, underscore the need for culturally responsive, local mental health providers.
- NAMI's recommendations highlight the importance of culturally responsive care, which this bill supports by growing local professionals.

· **Mechanism of Accountability:**

- Interim licensing helps ensure that pre-licensed therapists adhere to professional standards and complete their licensure hours effectively.
- This process also promotes better supervision and mentoring, vital for quality mental health care.

· **Combating Brain Drain:**

- Keeping our talented mental health professionals in Hawai'i is crucial. This bill can help reduce the brain drain that our state is currently experiencing.
- Local upbringing often translates to a higher likelihood of professionals staying or returning to Hawai'i, vital for maintaining a diverse and culturally aware workforce.

· **Economic Impact:**

- Employing local providers keeps money within the community, supporting our economy.
- Importing providers does not address the unique economic and cultural dynamics of Hawai'i.

· **Challenging the Status Quo:**

- The current expectation for therapists to work extensive unpaid hours post-degree is discriminatory and unsustainable, especially in Hawai'i's economic climate.
- This bill addresses these barriers, making the profession more accessible and equitable.

I firmly believe that the passage of HB1830 HD2 SD1 will be a significant step forward in enhancing the mental health landscape of Hawai'i. It will not only benefit mental health professionals but, more importantly, will have a profound impact on the well-being of our communities.

Thank you for considering my testimony in support of this vital piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Koch, Intern MFT

509-781-1559

kochkounseling@gmail.com

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 3:46:38 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
lori stitt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the Honorable Committee Members

Re: Strong Support for HB1830 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

Aloha Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB1830, a crucial measure for the advancement of mental health care in our beloved state of Hawai'i.

HB1830 represents a significant step forward in addressing the growing need for accessible and quality mental health services in Hawai'i. By establishing provisional or associate-level licensure for mental health professionals, this bill not only broadens the scope of available care but also supports the development of a robust, culturally competent, and local mental health workforce.

As someone who has witnessed firsthand the challenges in accessing locally based mental health care, I can attest to the profound impact that HB1830 will have in bridging these gaps, enhancing the availability of culturally sensitive and community-centric services, and ultimately fostering a more resilient and mentally healthy Hawai'i.

HB1830 addresses these challenges by:

- Facilitating the entry of qualified professionals into the mental health field.
- Enhancing the cultural competency and relevance of mental health services through local training.
- Ensuring that insurance reimbursements include services provided by associate-level professionals, thereby increasing affordability and accessibility for patients.
- Preventing “Brain Drain” of our local talent to the continent

· Improving Hawai'i's economy

I urge the committee to pass HB1830, not only as a legislative action but as a commitment to the health and well-being of our communities across Hawai'i. This bill is more than just a policy; it's a lifeline to many who are in dire need of compassionate and competent mental health care.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I am hopeful that with your support, HB1830 will pave the way for a healthier, more resilient Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your time and attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Lori Stitt

2nd year Counseling Psychology student UH Hilo

Intern Kauai Family Guidance Center

Intern Kauai Community College Hale Malama Mental Health Services

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 4:11:14 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Kocik	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Written Testimony in Support of HB1830

To the Honorable Committee Members

Re: Strong Support for HB1830 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

Aloha Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB1830, a crucial measure for the advancement of mental health care in our beloved, great state of Hawai'i.

HB1830 represents a significant step forward in addressing the growing need for accessible and quality mental health services in Hawai'i. By establishing provisional or associate-level licensure for mental health professionals, this bill not only broadens the scope of available care but also supports the development of a robust, culturally competent, and local mental health workforce.

As someone who has seen firsthand the challenges in accessing locally based mental health care, I can attest to the profound impact that HB1830 will have in bridging these gaps, enhancing the availability of culturally sensitive and community-centric services, and ultimately fostering a more resilient and mentally healthy Hawai'i.

HB1830 addresses these challenges by:

- Facilitating the entry of qualified professionals into the mental health field.
- Enhancing the cultural competency and relevance of mental health services through local training.
- Ensuring that insurance reimbursements include services provided by associate-level professionals, thereby increasing affordability and accessibility for patients.
- Preventing "Brain Drain" of our local talent to the continent
- Improving Hawai'i's economy

I urge the committee to pass HB1830, not only as a legislative action but as a commitment to the health and well-being of our communities across Hawai'i. This bill is more than just a policy; it's a lifeline to many who are in dire need of compassionate and competent mental health care.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I am hopeful that with your support, HB1830 will pave the way for a healthier, more resilient Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your time and attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Andrew Kocik

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 4:24:17 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Fabio Cardoso	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the Honorable Committee Members,

As an upcoming graduate of Chaminade University of Honolulu, I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for HB1830, a crucial measure for advancing mental health care in our beloved state of Hawai'i.

HB1830 represents a significant step forward in addressing the growing need for accessible and quality mental health services in Hawai'i. By establishing provisional or associate-level licensure for mental health professionals, this bill not only broadens the scope of available care but also supports the development of a robust, culturally competent, and local mental health workforce.

Having witnessed firsthand the challenges in accessing locally based mental health care, I can attest to the profound impact that HB1830 will have in bridging these gaps, enhancing the availability of culturally sensitive and community-centric services, and ultimately fostering a more resilient and mentally healthy Hawai'i.

HB1830 addresses these challenges by:

- Facilitating the entry of qualified professionals into the mental health field.
- Enhancing the cultural competency and relevance of mental health services through local training.
- Ensuring that insurance reimbursements include services provided by associate-level professionals, thereby increasing affordability and accessibility for patients.
- Preventing the "Brain Drain" of our local talent to the continent.
- Improving Hawai'i's economy.

I urge the committee to pass HB1830, not only as a legislative action but as a commitment to the health and well-being of our communities across Hawai'i. This bill is more than just a policy; it's a lifeline to many who are in dire need of compassionate and competent mental health care.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I am hopeful that with your support, HB1830 will pave the way for a healthier, more resilient Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your time and attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,
Fabio Cardoso

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 7:36:05 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amma King	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the Honorable Committee Members

Re: Strong Support for HB1830 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

Aloha Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for HB1830, a crucial measure for the advancement of mental health care in our beloved state of Hawai'i.

HB1830 represents a significant step forward in addressing the growing need for accessible and quality mental health services in Hawai'i. By establishing provisional or associate-level licensure for mental health professionals, this bill not only broadens the scope of available care but also supports the development of a robust, culturally competent, and local mental health workforce.

As someone who has witnessed firsthand the challenges in accessing locally based mental health care, I can attest to the profound impact that HB1830 will have in bridging these gaps, enhancing the availability of culturally sensitive and community-centric services, and ultimately fostering a more resilient and mentally healthy Hawai'i.

HB1830 addresses these challenges by:

- Facilitating the entry of qualified professionals into the mental health field.
- Enhancing the cultural competency and relevance of mental health services through local training.
- Ensuring that insurance reimbursements include services provided by associate-level professionals, thereby increasing affordability and accessibility for patients.
- Preventing “Brain Drain” of our local talent to the continent
- Improving Hawai'i's economy

I urge the committee to pass HB1830, not only as a legislative action but as a commitment to the health and well-being of our communities across Hawai'i. This bill is more than just a policy; it's a lifeline to many who are in dire need of compassionate and competent mental health care.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I am hopeful that with your support, HB1830 will pave the way for a healthier, more resilient Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your time and attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Amma King

M.A. Counseling Psychology

Testimony In Support of HB1830 HD2 SD1, Relating to Mental Health

April 3, 2024

Aloha Senator Dela Cruz, Senator Moriwaka, and Honorable Committee Members:

My name is Jethro Macaraeg, Licensed Social Worker (LSW) in favor of HB1830 HD2 SD1. I'm currently navigating the journey toward my LCSW licensure and am keenly aware of the challenges my peers and I face in meeting our clinical hour requirements amidst financial pressures. HB1830 HD2 SD1 proposes essential changes that could significantly ease this journey for many of us. To summarize:

- **Enhancing Mental Health Care Affordability:** The bill aims to enhance the affordability and accessibility of mental health care for the people of Hawai'i by ensuring insurance covers the costs.
- **Recognizing Post-Graduate Financial Strain:** It acknowledges the financial juggling act many post-graduates perform to meet licensure requirements.
- **Streamlining Licensure Path:** It aims to streamline the path to licensure, allowing us to enter the workforce sooner and more prepared.

Supporting HB1830 HD2 SD1 means championing a future where new mental health professionals can more readily contribute to our communities' health and resilience. This isn't just about reducing barriers for us as professionals; it's about enhancing the quality and availability of mental health services across Hawai'i. Your support of this bill reflects a commitment to both the welfare of those entering the field and the many lives they will touch through their work.

Thank you for considering the positive implications of your support for this bill on the mental health profession and the broader Hawai'i community.

Mahalo,

Jethro Macaraeg, LSW

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 8:49:04 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robin Ferrier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Written Testimony in Support of HB1830

To the Honorable Committee Members

Re: Strong Support for HB1830 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

Aloha Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB1830, a crucial measure for the advancement of mental health care in our beloved state of Hawai'i.

HB1830 represents a significant step forward in addressing the growing need for accessible and quality mental health services in Hawai'i. By establishing provisional or associate-level licensure for mental health professionals, this bill not only broadens the scope of available care but also supports the development of a robust, culturally competent, and local mental health workforce.

As someone who has witnessed firsthand the challenges in accessing locally based mental health care, I can attest to the profound impact that HB1830 will have in bridging these gaps, enhancing the availability of culturally sensitive and community-centric services, and ultimately fostering a more resilient and mentally healthy Hawai'i.

HB1830 addresses these challenges by:

- Facilitating the entry of qualified professionals into the mental health field.
- Enhancing the cultural competency and relevance of mental health services through local training.
- Ensuring that insurance reimbursements include services provided by associate-level professionals, thereby increasing affordability and accessibility for patients.
- Preventing “Brain Drain” of our local talent to the continent
- Improving Hawai’i’s economy

I urge the committee to pass HB1830, not only as a legislative action but as a commitment to the health and well-being of our communities across Hawai’i. This bill is more than just a policy; it's a lifeline to many who are in dire need of compassionate and competent mental health care.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I am hopeful that with your support, HB1830 will pave the way for a healthier, more resilient Hawai’i.

Mahalo for your time and attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely, Robin Ferrier

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 11:55:22 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
duane dias	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Members of the Legislature,

My name is Duane Dias. I'm a pre-license Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) passionate about improving our community's mental health. Today, I'm here to support the bill that introduces provisional licensure and insurance payment for junior mental health professionals. This bill is crucial for tackling the urgent need for more mental health services in our state.

Our state is known for lacking enough mental health professionals, which hits hard for those in remote areas, leading to untreated mental health issues, family problems, and increased substance abuse. As someone working towards full licensure, I've seen how hard it is for us at the entry-level to work without being paid through insurance. This situation is driving many talented workers away from our state.

This bill proposes a smart solution by allowing junior professionals to get paid through insurance, making it financially possible for them to stay and work here. This not only helps us but ensures that more people can access the mental health care they need.

Passing this bill will improve the availability and quality of mental health services, leading to a healthier and stronger community. For me personally, this bill represents hope and shows a commitment to prioritizing mental health care in our healthcare system.

I urge you to support this bill for the betterment of our state's mental health. Your backing could significantly help mitigate the mental health crisis and pave the way for a healthier future for everyone.

Thank you for considering my views and for your dedication to our community's health.

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2024 7:32:51 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rachel Ferguson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Written Testimony in Support of HB1830

To the Honorable Committee Members

Re: Strong Support for HB1830 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

Aloha Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rachel Ferguson, a Counseling Psychology graduate student residing in Volcano.

I am writing to express my strong support for HB1830, a crucial measure for the advancement of mental health care in our beloved state of Hawai'i.

HB1830 represents a significant step forward in addressing the growing need for accessible and quality mental health services in Hawai'i. By establishing provisional or associate-level licensure for mental health professionals, this bill not only broadens the scope of available care but also supports the development of a robust, culturally competent, and local mental health workforce.

As someone who has witnessed firsthand the challenges in accessing locally based mental health care, I can attest to the profound impact that HB1830 will have in bridging these gaps, enhancing

the availability of culturally sensitive and community-centric services, and ultimately fostering a more resilient and mentally healthy Hawai'i.

HB1830 addresses these challenges by:

- Facilitating the entry of qualified professionals into the mental health field.
- Enhancing the cultural competency and relevance of mental health services through local training.
- Ensuring that insurance reimbursements include services provided by associate-level professionals, thereby increasing affordability and accessibility for patients.
- Preventing “Brain Drain” of our local talent to the continent
- Improving Hawai'i's economy

I urge the committee to pass HB1830, not only as a legislative action but as a commitment to the health and well-being of our communities across Hawai'i. This bill is more than just a policy; it's a lifeline to many who are in dire need of compassionate and competent mental health care.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I am hopeful that with your support, HB1830 will pave the way for a healthier, more resilient Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your time and attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Rachel Ferguson

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2024 9:20:46 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
YiLin Fang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Written Testimony in Support of HB1830

To the Honorable Committee Members

Re: Strong Support for HB1830 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

Aloha Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB1830, a crucial measure for the advancement of mental health care in our beloved state of Hawai'i.

HB1830 represents a significant step forward in addressing the growing need for accessible and quality mental health services in Hawai'i. By establishing provisional or associate-level licensure for mental health professionals, this bill not only broadens the scope of available care but also supports the development of a robust, culturally competent, and local mental health workforce.

As someone who has witnessed firsthand the challenges in accessing locally based mental health care, I can attest to the profound impact that HB1830 will have in bridging these gaps, enhancing the availability of culturally sensitive and community-centric services, and ultimately fostering a more resilient and mentally healthy Hawai'i.

HB1830 addresses these challenges by:

- Facilitating the entry of qualified professionals into the mental health field.
- Enhancing the cultural competency and relevance of mental health services through local training.
- Ensuring that insurance reimbursements include services provided by associate-level professionals, thereby increasing affordability and accessibility for patients.
- Preventing “Brain Drain” of our local talent to the continent
- Improving Hawai'i's economy

I urge the committee to pass HB1830, not only as a legislative action but as a commitment to the health and well-being of our communities across Hawai'i. This bill is more than just a policy; it's a lifeline to many who are in dire need of compassionate and competent mental health care.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I am hopeful that with your support, HB1830 will pave the way for a healthier, more resilient Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your time and attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

YiLin Fang

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2024 9:21:29 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrea Ng	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am in strong support of Associate Licensing of Mental Health Professionals and respectfully ask this committee to pass this bill. As you know, this proposal would greatly expand the pool of providers on all islands, particularly on neighbor islands to help meet the demand for mental health services. This bill would also improve on-the-job training and cultivate homegrown talent - encouraging them to stay in Hawaii and meet the unique needs of our community.

Most importantly, this measure will benefit those seeking services by improving access and encouraging utilization of critical therapy services.

As a graduate student in clinical psychology, I have worked closely with community partners both on O'ahu and the outer islands. In the past few years of speaking and working with providers and partners, it is evident that our state is facing a large mental health crisis, and there are NOT enough providers to meet the needs of our people. There are months-long waitlists with nearly all mental health providers, which means that there are a large portion of Hawai'i residents who are suffering unnecessarily. Although the COVID-19 pandemic was 4 years ago, we still see its impact on our mental and physical health, especially with our keiki and kupuna who spent numerous years in isolation. The lingering mental and physical health impacts from COVID-19, along with the still largely unknown impact of the Maui wildfires last year, there are likely more folks in need. Therefore, as an aspiring healthcare professional, I urge the committee to pass this bill to help us adequately serve our community's needs.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Andrea Ng, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate
Clinical Studies Program
University of Hawai'i, at Mānoa

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2024 9:45:04 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emily Powers	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Written Testimony in Support of HB1830

To the Honorable Committee Members

Re: Strong Support for HB1830 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

Aloha Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB1830, a crucial measure for the advancement of mental health care in our beloved state of Hawai'i.

HB1830 represents a significant step forward in addressing the growing need for accessible and quality mental health services in Hawai'i. By establishing provisional or associate-level licensure for mental health professionals, this bill not only broadens the scope of available care but also supports the development of a robust, culturally competent, and local mental health workforce.

As someone who has witnessed firsthand the challenges in accessing locally based mental health care, I can attest to the profound impact that HB1830 will have in bridging these gaps, enhancing the availability of culturally sensitive and community-centric services, and ultimately fostering a more resilient and mentally healthy Hawai'i.

HB1830 addresses these challenges by:

- Facilitating the entry of qualified professionals into the mental health field.
- Enhancing the cultural competency and relevance of mental health services through local training.
- Ensuring that insurance reimbursements include services provided by associate-level professionals, thereby increasing affordability and accessibility for patients.
- Preventing “Brain Drain” of our local talent to the continent
- Improving Hawai’i’s economy

I urge the committee to pass HB1830, not only as a legislative action but as a commitment to the health and well-being of our communities across Hawai’i. This bill is more than just a policy; it's a lifeline to many who are in dire need of compassionate and competent mental health care.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I am hopeful that with your support, HB1830 will pave the way for a healthier, more resilient Hawai’i.

Mahalo for your time and attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Emily Powers

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2024 9:46:48 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tiana Aina	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Strong Support for HB1830 HD2 SDI - Relating to Mental Health

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my **STRONG SUPPORT** for House Bill 1830, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i and support social workers in receiving their clinical supervision.

As Clinical Social Work Student Intern, I am very aware of the barriers faced by emerging professionals in our field. Upon graduation, aspiring mental health professionals are challenged to complete the required clinical hours without insurance reimbursement. This is especially true as the cost of living continue to increase, prohibiting people from engaging pre-licensed professionals for immediate mental health support rather than wait for an opening with a licensed professional. It is so important to retain these mental health professionals, as their local education and field experiences provide foundational understanding for the stresses unique to the people of Hawai'i.

As a resident of East Hawai'i, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges posed by limited access to mental health services and their impact at the individual, family, and the community levels. Taking immediate measures to increase access will help others to access the support they seek to manage their well-being.

HB1830 addresses these crucial issues by:

1. **Creating Pathways for Emerging Professionals:** By establishing associate licensure, this bill provides an essential stepping stone for recent graduates and those entering the mental health field. This not only aids their professional development but also helps in addressing the shortage of qualified mental health professionals in Hawai'i.
1. **Enhancing Accessibility to Mental Health Services:** The bill's provision for insurance reimbursements for services rendered by provisional or associate-level professionals will

make mental health care more affordable and accessible to a broader segment of our population.

I firmly believe that the passage of HB1830 will be a significant step forward in enhancing the accessibility of mental health services of Hawai'i. In turn, this will have a positive impact on the well-being of our communities.

I appreciate the Committee's commitment to these very important issues, and I am humbled to have this opportunity to share my feedback.

Mahalo piha,

Tiana Aina

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2024 9:54:23 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dr. John Souza, Jr., LMFT, DMFT	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of House Bill 1830 (HB1830)

Aloha Honorable Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee,

I am writing to express my steadfast support for House Bill 1830 (HB1830), a crucial legislative effort aimed at addressing the significant mental health provider shortage in our beloved state of Hawai'i. The passage of HB1830 represents not merely a regulatory adjustment, but a profound opportunity to enhance the mental health and wellbeing of our communities.

In Hawai'i, the journey towards mental health care is beset with challenges, most notably marked by extensive wait times for therapy appointments, with some individuals waiting up to six months for crucial support. This delay is a manifestation of a wider crisis: for every 360 residents, there is just one licensed mental health professional available—a stark indication of the provider shortage plaguing our state. This scarcity is exacerbated by the exodus of therapists seeking more supportive professional environments elsewhere, diminishing the local pool of qualified professionals ready to serve our communities, especially in times of crisis such as the aftermath of natural disasters and the ongoing impacts of the pandemic.

HB1830 offers a visionary solution by proposing the creation of provisional or “associate” licenses for mental health professionals. This initiative would allow trained and educated therapists to earn a livable wage while completing their required supervised clinical experience. By enabling these providers to be reimbursed through insurance, we not only retain talent within our state but also increase the accessibility of mental health services to those in need.

The argument against HB1830, predicated on administrative and insurance concerns, fails to recognize the bill's potential to help mental health care in Hawai'i adapt to our changing needs. Administrative apprehensions regarding the implementation of a tiered licensing system overlook the support and precedents set by states like Ohio, Oregon, and New Mexico, which have successfully navigated similar transitions with minimal struggle.

Moreover, the resistance from insurance companies, centered on the fear of increased operational costs, neglects the broader picture: investing in mental health care is not an expense but a crucial investment in the health and productivity of our society. The long-term savings from reduced emergency department visits, decreased acute care use, and overall improved public health outcomes far outweigh the short-term financial considerations.

HB1830 embodies a comprehensive response to the urgent need for more mental health providers in Hawai'i. It aligns with the values of compassion, community care, and aloha that define our state. As such, I urge the committee to recognize the transformative potential of HB1830 for the mental health landscape in Hawai'i.

Let us unite in taking a decisive step towards alleviating the mental health provider shortage, enhancing the quality of care for our residents, and fostering a healthier, more resilient Hawai'i.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your service to our state.

With deepest respect,

Dr. John

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2024 10:02:12 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacqueline Valoy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am in support of Associate Licensing of Mental Health Professionals and respectfully ask this committee to pass this bill. This proposal would expand the pool of providers on all islands, particularly on neighbor islands to help meet the demand for mental health services. This bill would also improve on-the-job training and cultivate homegrown talent - encouraging them to stay in Hawaii and meet the unique needs of our community.

Most importantly, this measure will benefit those seeking services by improving access and encouraging utilization of critical therapy services.

As an emerging Social Worker in private practice this bill will lower the barriers to entry to the field and allow other new profesionas to offer much needed mental health services.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jacqueline

Aloha, my name is Christen Zulli and I'm a resident of Hawaii Island and I support HB 1830. I am writing this testimonial in the wake of the loss of my friend due to suicide. He was 52, a father, and highly established professional with an very impressive resume. Mental health crisis does not discriminate based on age, wealth, or relationship status. He left the island searching for better services, never to return alive.

If passed, this Bill will allow me utilize my Master's in Counseling Psychology Degree, which I obtained from the University of Hawaii, Hilo, and several other post-degree certifications in trauma treatment, perinatal mental health, and couples coaching. I would finally be able to re-enter the work force knowing my time, energy, and expertise will be appropriately compensated. I will be able to bring at least 120 hours, monthly, of direct client time to our community. If the university has a graduating class of 15 Mental Health Counselors, that's at least 300 additional hours – and I am only talking myself and Hilo's Counseling Psychology Degree graduates. We desperately need more mental health professionals and better services state-wide. This should be one of the easiest Bills to say, "yes" to. You quite literally could be saving someone's life.

Mahalo for passing this Bill,

Christen Zulli

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2024 10:31:10 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Thomas Mullen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Honorable Chairperson, Co-Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am in support of Associate Licensing of Mental Health Professionals and respectfully ask this committee to pass this bill. This proposal would expand the pool of providers on all islands, particularly on neighbor islands to help meet the demand for mental health services. This bill would also improve on-the-job training and cultivate homegrown talent - encouraging them to stay in Hawaii and meet the unique needs of our community.

Most importantly, this measure will benefit those seeking services by improving access and encouraging utilization of critical therapy services.

My name is T.J. Mullen and I am graduating from the Thompson School of Social Work, at UH Manoa as a Master of Social Work and I work on the island of Kaua'i. I am a distance education student, endeavoring to serve my community, and have worked as an intern in Child Family, Behavioral / Mental Health, and in Substance Use Recovery. I can attest that there is a crisis statewide in the number of clients needing acute mental health services far exceeds the number of available clinicians.

Immediate action is needed to address these issues. Without policy change and an infusion of resources, such as the establishment of a state mental health crisis task force, we are at risk of burning out what new talent is entering the workforce. This will only exacerbate the current crisis leading to an untenable and extremely costly position for Hawai'i State Mental Health Services.

Mahalo nu loa for you time and consideration,

Thomas J. Mullen

HB-1830-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2024 11:26:17 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cindy Rote	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Please support the passing of HB1830 that would allow associate-level practitioners who have completed rigorous educational and other professional development requirements are deemed capable of rendering professional services to clients seeking mental health treatment under licensed clinical supervision in order to complete the postdegree, pre-license hours required for full licensure status the ability to be compensated for their hours of work.

Many recent graduates are not able to afford to complete their required hours needed to become fully licensed in Hawaii due to the high cost of living. The demand for mental health professionals is high in every state and city across the country. There are many opportunities for recent mental health graduates to leave Hawaii and be paid high competitive wages in other states that allow insurance companies to be billed for services rendered by recent graduates who are properly and legally supervised by a licensed mental health professional. HB1830 is needed in Hawaii to keep our graduates and professionals in state. The mental health needs of our community continue to grow each year. We need qualified mental health professionals to stay in Hawaii. HB1830 is vital to meet the demand of the mental health services needed by our community. Please support HB1830.

Thank you for your time and consideration.