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Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

Before the
Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Affairs
and
Senate Committee on Judiciary
Friday, February 23, 2024
10:15 a.m.
Conference Room 229 and Videoconference

On the following measure:
S.B. 1444, S.D. 1, RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Chair Keohokalole, Chair Rhoads, and Members of the Committee:

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 and amendments related to the proposed revisions to Hawaii Revised Statutes chapters 451J and 453D on this bill.

The purposes of this bill are to: (1) establish a provisional or associate level licensure requirements for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists authorize insurance reimbursements in certain circumstances; (2)

declare that the general fund expenditure ceiling has been exceeded; and (3) make an appropriation.

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

S.B. 1444, 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 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 to consumers.

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

Should this bill advance, the Department respectfully requests the following amendments to facilitate provisional licensure:

- Pages 3 to 5, Part II

§451J- **Provisional license; associate marriage and family therapist; services reimbursable.** (a) The department shall grant, upon application and payment of proper fees, provisional licensure as an associate marriage and family therapist to an individual who:

(1) Has received from an accredited educational institution a master's or doctoral degree in marriage and family therapy or an allied field related to the practice of mental health counseling that includes or is supplemented by, graduate-level course work comprising a minimum of thirty-three semester hours or forty-four quarter hours in the following course areas:

~~(A) — Marriage and family studies: nine semester hours or twelve quarter hours;~~

~~(B) — Marriage and family therapy studies: nine semester hours or twelve quarter hours;~~

~~(C) — Human development: nine semester hours or twelve quarter hours;~~

~~(D) — Ethical and professional studies: three semester hours or twelve quarter hours;~~

~~(E) — Research: three semester hours or four quarter hours;~~

(2) Has completed a one-year practicum that included three hundred hours supervised client contact; and

(3) During the period of time necessary to fulfill the requirements for licensure as a marriage and family therapist pursuant to section 451J-7, engages in practice under the clinical supervision of a licensed marriage and family therapist that is in good standing, or any licensed mental health professional during the period of time necessary to fulfill the clinical experience requirements for licensure as a marriage and family therapist pursuant to section 451J-7(3); provided that the licensed marriage and family therapist or licensed mental health professional is in good standing with the department.

- Pages 15 to 19, Part III

§453D- Provisional license associate mental health counselor; services reimbursable. (a) The department shall grant, upon application and

payment of proper fees, provisional licensure as an associate mental health counselor to an individual who:

(1) Has received from an accredited educational institution a master's or doctoral degree in counseling or in an allied field related to the practice of mental health counseling that includes, or is supplemented by, graduate level course work in counseling comprising a minimum of forty-eight semester hours or seventy-two quarter hours in the following course areas, with a minimum of three semester hours or five quarter hours in each course area as indicated below:

- (A) Human growth and development, including the study of life span development; strategies to facilitate that development and transitions; theories of learning and personality development; and human behavior to include crisis, disabilities, addictive behavior, and environmental factors;
- (B) Social and cultural foundations, including the study of issues and trends in a multicultural and diverse society, including ages; races; religious or sexual preferences; physical disabilities; ethnicities and cultures; genders; socioeconomics; intellectual abilities; and individual, family, and group strategies of diverse groups;
- (C) Counseling theories and applications, including counseling and consultation, including both individual and systems perspectives; interviewing; assessment; and counseling skills; and applying principles, methods, and theories of counseling, treatment and counseling of mental and emotional disorders, and educational techniques aimed at preventing these disorders with individuals and families;
- (D) Group theory and practice, including principles of group dynamics, group process, group leadership styles, theories and methods of group counseling, and the application of theory to the group processes;

- ~~(E) Career and lifestyle development, including the study of vocational development theories; decision-making models; assessment instruments; and techniques, types, sources, and uses of occupational and educational information systems, career development applications, and career counseling processes, techniques, and resources;~~
- ~~(F) Appraisal of human behavior, including assessment and diagnosis of disorders with an emphasis on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders' categories and an understanding of these disorders relative to the counseling context;~~
- ~~(G) Tests and measurements, including theoretical and historical bases for assessment techniques, and assessment methods, including analysis of various types of tests to select, administer, interpret, and use assessment and evaluation instruments and techniques in counseling;~~
- ~~(H) Research and program evaluation, including research design and methods, statistical analysis, principles, practices, and application of needs assessment and program evaluation;~~
- ~~(I) Professional orientation and ethics, including the history of the helping profession, professional roles and functions, ethical standards, confidentiality, professional organizations, and public policy process, including advocacy on behalf of the profession and its clientele; and~~
- (JA) At least two academic terms of supervised mental health practicum intern experience for graduate credit of at least six semester hours or ten quarter hours in a mental health counseling setting, with a total of three hundred hours of supervised client contact; provided that the practicum experience shall be completed under the clinical supervision of a person who is

licensed as a mental health counselor, psychologist, clinical social worker, advanced practice registered nurse with a specialty in mental health, marriage and family therapist, or physician with a specialty in psychiatry; and

(2) During the period of time necessary to fulfill the requirements for licensure as a mental health counselor pursuant to section 453D-7, engages in practice under the clinical supervision of a licensed mental health counselor that is in good standing, psychologist, clinical social worker, advanced practice registered nurse with a specialty in mental health, marriage and family therapist, or physician with a specialty in psychiatry that is in good standing with the department.

The Department also respectfully requests the following 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.
2. Minimally, a delayed implementation date of July 1, 2026, to ensure that:
 - a. In line with the request above, the Division would need the appropriate time to establish, recruit, and hire an OA-V.
 - b. The appropriate updates are made to the database and applications are created.

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



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

February 23, 2024

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION, AND JUDICARY

Senate Bill 1444 SD1 – Relating to Mental Health

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports Senate Bill 1444 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. Requires psychologist license applicants to possess a doctoral degree and complete certain supervised experience requirements before sitting for the licensing examination. 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

Testimony of the Board of Psychology

Before the
Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection
and
Senate Committee on Judiciary
Friday, February 23, 2024
10:15 a.m.
Conference Room 229 and Videoconference

On the following measure:
S.B. 1444, H.D. 1, RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Chair Keohokalole, Chair Rhodes, and Members of the Committees:

My name is Christopher Fernandez, and I am the Executive Officer of the Board of Psychology (Board).

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) declare that the general fund expenditure ceiling has been exceeded; and (3) make an appropriation.

The Board supports the intent of this bill and offers comments on Part IV regarding psychologists.

- The Board appreciates the amendments made to this bill on page 38, lines 16 to 17, by the Committee on Health and Human Services, which removed language the Board did not support as it would have allowed a person to apply for the examination prior to completing their doctoral degree. The Board requests the following amendment:

Starting on page 38, line 16:

“(3) The applicant for licensure has passed an examination as may be prescribed by the board[.]; provided that those issued a provisional license pursuant to 465- shall be authorized to take the examination upon the license being issued. Authorization for associate psychologists to take the examination shall terminate on

the date the provisional license expires, or if disciplinary action is taken on the license.”

- Regarding page 33, line 15 to page 34, line 4, the current language appears overly general for the purpose of the exemption. The current language could allow students of other professions related to the practice of psychology to successfully argue for exemption from the requirements of chapter 465. The Board requests the following amendment:

“(4) Any person who is a student of psychology [~~-, a psychological intern, or a resident in psychology preparing for the profession of psychology under supervision in a training institution or facility and who is designated by a title as "psychology trainee", "psychology student", "psychology intern", or "psychology resident", that indicates the person's training status~~], or enrolled in a professional psychology training program as defined by this chapter; provided that the person shall not identify the person's self as a psychologist or associate psychologist or imply that the person is licensed to practice psychology;”
- The Board has two concerns regarding page 39, lines 6 to 9, which provides the Board with the authority to grant a waiver for State-employed psychologists who have not obtained a license to practice, and whose two year time frame to obtain licensure has expired:
 - (1) The phrase “circumstances beyond the psychologist’s control” does not clearly outline or define what circumstances would qualify within the practice of psychology nor what would be considered “beyond” the psychologist’s control; and
 - (2) The current language does not provide a time limit on the waiver. As written, the waiver could be used to retain an unlicensed psychologist indefinitely, which would go against the core purpose of the chapter.

The Board requests the Committees include language that provides an expiration date of up to (1) year with the opportunity to obtain a one-time re-authorization requested in the same fashion as the first. The Board suggests the following language to replace the current amended language. Starting on page 38, line 20:

§465-7.6 Licensure of state employed clinical psychologists.

(a) A psychologist employed in a civil service clinical psychologist position in this State after January 1, 1988, shall be licensed subject to:

- (1) Meeting the requirements of section 465-7; and
- (2) Obtaining licensure within two years from the date of employment[.];

provided that, if the psychologist is not able to obtain licensure pursuant to subsection (a)(2), the board may grant a waiver of up to one year to complete the requirements for licensure, if the psychologist is able to demonstrate that the inability to meet the requirements for licensure was caused by circumstances beyond the psychologist's control.

(b) [~~After~~] Absent a waiver or a one-time re-authorization of the waiver obtained pursuant to subsection (a), or upon the expiration of the time period in subsection (a), paragraph (2) [has expired], a psychologist, employed in a civil service clinical psychologist position rendering diagnostic or treatment services, who has not obtained a license, shall immediately cease and desist the practice of psychology until a license is obtained pursuant to this chapter.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
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**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB1444 SD1
RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

SENATOR JARRETT KEOHOKALO, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE
SENATOR KARL RHOADS, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Hearing Date: February 23, 2024

Room Number: 016

1 **Fiscal Implications:** Undetermined

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

3 **Department Testimony:** There is a clear 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.

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 This bill supports the ability of graduate students who provide mental health services to
2 remain in our state and provide these much-needed services, while completing their training and
3 licensure requirements. Individuals trained at the doctoral level are difficult to recruit and retain
4 in the state. This bill provides a reasonable path, commensurate to national standards, for
5 doctoral level psychologists to obtain their license and while continuing to provide services for
6 the state. It is very clear that there is a need for additional mental health providers to support
7 vulnerable populations throughout Hawai‘i.

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

13
14 **Offered Amendments:** We would strongly recommend that pre-licensed psychologists who
15 have completed internship requirements be allowed to take the Examination for Professional
16 Practice in Psychology (EPPP) **prior** to completing postdoctoral hours. It is recommended by the
17 American Psychological Association that the EPPP be taken as soon as possible after completing
18 graduate course work, not waiting until completion of postdoctoral hours, and this is allowed in
19 most states³. Additionally, the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB)
20 suggests that the examination be taken directly after graduation; this reduces the need for
21 additional study materials, which often costs thousands of dollars, and increases the likelihood of
22 passing the examination⁴. Currently, applicants are taking the examination in other states so that
23 they can complete licensure soon after completing their postdoctoral training hours. To do this,

³ American Psychological Association, The Path to EPPP Excellence (2007)
<https://www.apa.org/gradpsych/2007/09/eppp#:~:text=Tip%203%3A%20Take%20it%20as%20soon%20as%20possible.&text=Some%20states%2C%20however%2C%20including%20Kentucky,exams%20or%20internship%2C%20s he%20says.>

⁴ Santoro, H. (2023, April 1). New psychology licensing exam expands. *Monitor on Psychology*, 54(3).
<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2023/04/psychology-licensing-exam-expands>

1 they pay other states a fee for registration, then they must pay an additional fee to transfer the
2 test score back to Hawai'i. This has several negative effects including:

- 3 • Loss of revenue for the State;
- 4 • Increased cost to those taking the examination;
- 5 • Losing trained psychologists to other states;
- 6 • Increase burden to the licensing board receiving the results from another state;
- 7 • Delays in obtaining licensure, resulting in less care provided by licensed practitioners for
8 the people of this state.

9
10 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 in SUPPORT of S.B.1444 SD1, Relating to Mental Health

Senator Rhoads, Chair
Senator Gabbard, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Senator Keohokalole, Chair
Senator Fukunaga, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection

February 23, 2024, at 10:15 am

Room Number: 229

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) in the Governor's Office SUPPORTS S.B.1444 SD1, Relating to Mental Health.

Established through Act 291 (Session Laws of Hawai'i 2022) the overall aim of the OWR is to make Hawai'i a trauma-informed state. OWR is focused on breaking down barriers that impact the physical, social, and emotional well-being of Hawai'i's people. OWR explores avenues to increase access and availability to mental, behavioral, social, and emotional health services and support.

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.

S.B.1444 SD1 increases access to mental health professionals (MHP) and assures individuals, couples, and families are able to acquire their services and support, regardless of their financial situation. This bill also provides support and removes barriers for our mental health professionals. 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.

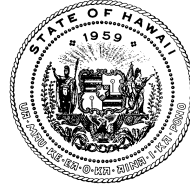
Trauma-informed care (TIC) is an approach to understanding and responding to the widespread impact of trauma. By passing this bill, the State would be upholding the TIC principles of Safety, Peer Support, Empowerment, and Voice and Choice, which strengthens our pathway towards a trauma-informed state. As such, the OWR supports S.B.1444 SD1.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tia L R Hartsock".

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

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
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**WRITTEN
TESTIMONY
ONLY**

STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH
Testimony to the Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection
And Senate Committee on Judiciary
in Support of S.B. 1444 SD1
RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

February 23, 2024, 10:15 a.m., CR229 and Videoconference

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Chairs Keohokalole and Rhoads, Vice-Chairs Fukunaga and Gabbard, and Members of the Committees:

Hawaii 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 State Council on Mental Health supports S.B. 1444 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 Hawaii. By establishing provisional or associate-level licensure requirements, this measure will facilitate 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 interns removes barriers to entry into the mental health profession. This is particularly important in areas where there is a high demand for services but a limited number of licensed providers. Additionally, the provision that allows the Board of Psychology to grant licensure waivers in certain circumstances for psychologists is a sensible measure that recognizes the diverse backgrounds and experiences of individuals entering the field. This flexibility enables qualified professionals to obtain licensure more efficiently without compromising public safety or the integrity of the profession.

This measure represents a balanced approach to addressing the challenges facing the mental health workforce. By streamlining licensure requirements, authorizing insurance reimbursements, and providing flexibility for licensure waivers, this bill ensures that individuals in need of mental health services can access timely and high-quality care. The members of this Council unanimously urge you to support SB1444 SD1 and help improve mental health outcomes for our community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please contact us at DOH.SCMHChairperson@doh.hawaii.gov.

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Friday February 23, 2024 10:15 A.M. – Rm 229 and via VIDEO CONFERENCE

Testimony in Strong Support of SB1444

The National Association of Social Workers – Hawai'i (NASW- HI) strongly supports SB1444 SD1 Relating to Mental Health, which establishes Associate-Level Licenses for Psychologists, Mental Health Counselors, and Marriage and Family Therapists; and clarifies the ability of a Licensed Social Worker (L.S.W.) to bill health insurance under the supervision of a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (L.C.S.W.).

This bill – along with seven other measures introduced during this legislative biennium (SB343, SB2243, HB776, HB1242, HB1300, and HB1830) does several important things. It creates an Associate-Level of Licensure for Psychologists, Mental Health Counselors, and Marriage and Family Therapists based on what is done in half the other states; as well as replicates the current L.S.W.-level of licensure in Hawaii for Social Workers. This Associate-Level Licensure is the mechanism by which clinicians, who have already completed their graduate school courses and degree, can be compensated while they are engaged in the required period of supervised practice to attain full licensure.

This is important because there are many states that allow this; states with a much wider range of practice opportunities, as well as much lower costs of living – drawing homegrown talent away from Hawaii.

This bill also clarifies that a L.S.W. social worker can bill insurance under the clinical license of a supervising L.C.S.W..

Associate Licensure creates opportunities to open up more clinicians in supervision to see more 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 helps 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; but our policies do very little to help keep them in state, after graduation.

This bill 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.

Technical background:

HRS 467E authorizes those with a Masters in Social Work (M.S.W.) degree to obtain a “License in Social Work” or “L.S.W.”, as set forth in HRS sections 467E-2. Through the L.S.W. licensure, the 3,000 hours of *clinical* services provided by the L.S.W. to patients – while under the supervision of a qualified “Licensed *Clinical* Social Worker” (L.C.S.W.) (pursuant HRS 467E-7(3)(C) - qualifies for insurance reimbursement.

While a practitioner with a M.S.W. degree does not need a L.S.W. to fulfill the hours of clinical supervision required to obtain an L.C.S.W., we are seeking to clarify and codify this mechanism to make clear that an L.S.W.'s supervised clinical services are indeed reimbursable under their supervising L.C.S.W.'s insurance. It is the “License” that the M.S.W. applies for and holds which is key to the reimbursement.

Accordingly, this bill creates similar “Associate Licenses” for other mental health professions. The multi-tiered licensing structure already codified within the Social Work statutes serves as a template for the Associate-Level Licensure sought in this bill for Marriage Family Therapists, Mental Health Counselors, and Psychologists.

The crux of these proposals is to eliminate the requirement that these mental health practitioners work many years for free before achieving clinical licensure, risking brain drain and burgeoning mental health provider shortages.

Focus on the Clinical Nature of Mental Health Services in Time of Great Need:

We thank the former Health & Human Services Committee Chair, Senator San Buenaventura for the technical amendments she made to clarify the circumstances under which the services provided by supervised licensed social workers seeking licensure as a “Licensed Clinical Social Worker” are reimbursed by health insurance. This is important as there is currently confusion in insurance billing practices.

In this effort, we want to emphasize the “**clinical**” nature of the licenses we hope to be established through these proposals – which would allow insurance reimbursement for the services provided by supervisees/trainees gaining the required training, skills, and guidance necessary to independently perform one-on-one *clinical* therapy.

To illustrate this distinction, the statutes respecting the “Practice of Social Work,” and the “Limitations of Scope of Practice,” defined and outlined in HRS Sections 467E-1 and 467E-1.5, respectively, provide that “licensed bachelor social workers” (L.B.S.W.s) and “licensed social workers” (L.S.W.s) are NOT authorized to independently perform “Clinical diagnosis or psychotherapy, or both, [as may be] provided by a licensed clinical social worker [L.C.S.W.]” pursuant to the definition of the “Practice of Social Work” in HRS 467E-1(8). (*Underlining added.*)

To reiterate, the current law *already* allows insurance reimbursement for the clinical services provided by those with a “License in Social Work” (“L.S.W.”) who are pursuing a *clinical* license (L.C.S.W.) in accordance with the requirements outlined in HRS 467E-7(3)(C) – which requires supervision by a Licensed “Clinical” Social Worker (L.C.S.W.) who meets the requirements set forth in HRS 467E-7(3)(D). This licensing structure is replicated in this bill for Marriage and Family Therapists; Mental Health Counselors; and Psychologists – so the reach of all these professions’ clinical services in Hawaii can grow to meet the burgeoning demand.

AMENDMENT REQUEST: Consider Retaining Exemptions for Trainees:

We support comments from other mental health professionals suggesting that we **retain the proposed repealed statutory language in these bills which is aimed to remove exemptions to licensure for clinical trainees**. In our view, the aim of this bill should be to **CREATE, NOT REQUIRE an Associate License** which allows supervised clinical work to be compensated - because licensure is required for insurance reimbursement. If the **Associate License is treated as an option; not a requirement, many of the concerns presented by the DCCA would no longer apply.**

To be specific: except for Social Workers, this bill removes trainee exemptions from licensure **[for Marriage & Family Therapists: p.7, lines 18 – p.8 lines 2; p.11, lines 13-15; for Mental Health Counselors: p. 25, line 19 – p. 26, line 2; for Psychologists: p. 33 lines 15 – p. 34, line 1, p. 35, lines 18-19]**. Removing these trainee license exemptions forces trainees to get the newly created “Associate License.” This may be desirable for the DCCA in their efforts to monitor the profession, institute greater consumer protection measures, and collect more licensing fees to aid in their operations - considerations to which we defer to the legislature and the DCCA.

However, removing exemptions does create questions on what to do about the trainees currently engaged in supervised practice before the associate licensure is available. If these exemptions are retained, questions like “grandfathering” current trainees will become moot.

AMENDMENT REQUEST: Support Flexibility in Taking Full-Licensure Exams

Finally, we support reinstating language that was removed in the SD1 to allow post-doctorate trainees in psychology to take their full licensure exam before completing their post-doctoral supervised training requirements. It has been made apparent that this amendment was based on a mis-reading of its application to exam requirements for regular licensure, and not to the proposed provisional/associate-level licensure – as is evidenced by the Board of Psychology’s emphasis in prior testimony that a doctoral degree be completed first before applying for a *provisional* license. We agree, but are cognizant that changes in the SD1 were made to the full licensure statute, and not to proposed language for Associate- Level Licensure.

Accordingly, we anticipate the Board of Psychology will offer an amendment similar to what they offered in HB1830 HD1, which is to include the following language after HRS 465-7(a)(3), as it relates to full licensure, on page 38, line 17, as follows:

“[.]; provided further that those issued a provisional license pursuant to 465- shall be authorized to take the examination upon issuance of the provisional license.

Alternatively, we ask that the language from original SB1444, p. 38 lines 18-21, be reinserted into SB1444 SD1 on page 38, line 17 as follows:

“provided that nothing in this subsection shall be construed as requiring the applicant to complete the requirements of paragraph (2) to be eligible to take the examination required in paragraph (3).”

Removing these untimely testing requirements is consistent with the removal of testing requirements for Associate Licensees in Marriage and Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling from the last draft of this bill; thus clearing more financial and logistical burdens to potential providers.

We appreciate your careful attention to this critical mental health access bill and are available for further questions and clarifications. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in very strong support.

Sincerely,

 MSW, LCSW

Sonja Bigalke-Bannan, MSW, LCSW

Executive Director, National Association of Social Workers- Hawai’i Chapter

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 12:58:04 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Linda Tesar Amimoto	Testifying for Awareness Therapy Maui	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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. Current provider-to-patient ratios in Hawai'i show a stark need for more mental health professionals, especially Maui since the fires. 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.



**Parents And
Children Together**

**BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIPS
THAT MATTER MOST**

ParentsAndChildrenTogether.org

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 1444 SD1 RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

TO: Chair Keohokalole, Vice-Chair Fukunaga, & Members,
Senate Committee on Commerce & Consumer Protection

Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Gabbard & Members,
Senate Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Ryan Kusumoto, President & CEO

DATE: February 23, 2024 at 10:15 AM

Parents and Children Together (PACT) supports SB 1444 SD1 Relating to Mental Health, which establishes provisional or associate-level licensure requirements for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists and authorizes insurance reimbursements in certain circumstances.

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. 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 to 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.



Strong Support for [Associate Licensing bill \(SB1444\)](#)- Relating to Mental Health

Dear Committee Members,

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 SB1444, 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.

SB1444 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 SB1444 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

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 8:38:52 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444. This bill is necessary to address the giant gap in meeting the mental health needs of the community of Hawaii. There are simply not even close to enough therapists to support the people needing services. We have had very long waitlists for our services at our Center for years. There are thousands of human beings with trauma stuck in their bodies all throughout Hawaii who are living in pain, living with overwhelming addiction, barely surviving, who need services and by passing this bill we will do something very important by providing hope to them and by implementing this bill, we will offer them support and healing.

Also, people who have graduated deserve to be paid for the many thousands of supervised hours needed to obtain licensure and this bill will do just that.

Thank you so much for taking a stand for the people of Hawaii. Thank you for your service

Mahalo,
Jeremy Kalan, CEO, Center for Healing & Transformation



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 1444 SD1: RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

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

FROM: Rob Van Tassell, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawai'i

Hearing: Friday 02/23/24 at 10:15 AM; CR 229 & via videoconference

Chair Keohokalole and Rhoads, Vice Chair Fukunaga and Gabbard, and Members of the Committee

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **SB 1444 SD1**, which establishes a provisional or associate level licensure for marriage and family therapist, mental health counselors, and psychologists and authorizes insurance reimbursement in certain circumstances. I am Rob Van Tassell, with Catholic Charities Hawai'i.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawai'i for over 75 years. CCH has programs serving children, families, elders, homeless, veterans, and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy for the most vulnerable in Hawai'i. Catholic Charities Hawai'i has a long history of providing counseling services to the people of Hawai'i.

The shortage of qualified mental health providers, including psychiatrists, psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, counselors, and marriage and family therapists has been a persistent issue in the mental health workforce. The pandemic has further intensified this shortage, creating a heightened demand for mental health services. People in Hawai'i struggle to get the help they need. The shortage is worse for neighbor islands and rural areas and even more so for youth and children in need of mental health services.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i has successfully trained and developed highly qualified mental health professionals. This bill presents an opportunity for organizations like ours to expand efforts in workforce development, ultimately contributing to increasing mental health services in Hawai'i.

Catholic Charities Hawaii supports this bill which will increase the workforce capacity of qualified mental health professionals to address the mental health crisis in Hawai'i. We urge your support for this bill and ask for your assistance in its passing during this legislative session.

Please contact our Director of Advocacy and Community Relations, Shellie Niles at (808) 527-4813 if you have any questions.



SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 4:14:34 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 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.



To: The Honorable Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair
The Honorable Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce & Consumer Protection

The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
The Honorable Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

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

Hearing: Friday, February 23, 2024, 10:15 AM, Conference Room 229

RE: **SB1444 SD1 Relating to Mental Health**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of SB1444 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.

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. In turn, this will 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 SB1444 SD1**.



SB: 1444 SD1

Support this bill: Yes

Aloha

I've worked in Hawai'i, in the nonprofit family services sector for more than thirty years. I am a licensed marriage and family therapist, specializing in children, parenting, and trauma work. I currently run a nonprofit family counseling center in Central Honolulu.

Our new counseling center has been open for less than two years and we have had a waiting list since opening. We are struggling to recruit and maintain adequate professional staff.

We have a two-fold mission: We are committed to training local mental health professionals while providing top level mental health treatment to our clients. From our perspective, this bill would greatly assist us in achieving both goals.

As the clinical director I am responsible for supervising and signing off on the work of our pre-licensed staff. This means that I am willing to sign my name to, and risk my reputation for their work. I supervise, sit in on sessions, meet regularly, and provide feedback. Many of our clients are children whose parents are highly involved in their treatment. Feedback from client parents, as well as adult clients is consistently positive in response to the work of our pre-licensed staff.

The set up for pre-licensed mental health professionals in Hawai'i is frankly impossible and provides no incentive for folks to remain in Hawai'i. As noted, Hawai'i needs to come along side the nearly half of all states that already have an associate/training license. After completing two years of graduate school, that includes rigorous on-the-job client internships, these debt-burdened mental health professionals are currently asked to find a way to make a living, and accumulate two years of hands-on training in their field in order to sit for licensure. Given Hawai'i's strong push for universal health coverage, our citizens are loath to pay out of pocket for services which are covered by insurance. It is impossible to earn a living in the preferred field, as a pre-licensed therapist if insurance reimbursements are not possible.

Thank you for your consideration of this important bill.

With aloha,

Kristine Altwies, LMFT
Clinical Director

1632 S. King St.,
Honolulu, HI 96826
Tel: (808) 589-2367
www.ponoroots.org



Subject: SB 1444 SD1 Support

To the Honorable Committee Members

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on SB 1444. The Hawai'i Counselors Association (HCA) Executive Board and members support SB 1444. 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 SB 1444. This does not include recent graduates who are currently working on their post-graduate experience. The HCA Executive Board and members have expressed strong support for SB 1444. We feel strongly that the 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.

The intent of SB 1444 is to expand the quality of mental health services by allowing provisional/associate-level licensure for mental health practitioners. Hawaii currently has a shortage of licensed mental health professionals, and many providers have waitlists. SB 1444 will help to address the shortage of mental health providers in Hawaii by allowing graduate-level 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.

The HCA Executive Board also offers comments on the National Counselor Exam (NCE) as a requirement for Associate Licensure and recognizes the removal of this requirement. HCA members were polled, and there are mixed opinions. Some feel that passing the NCE should be required to obtain associate licensure as it sets a standard for the profession and practice. Others feel the exam should remain a requirement for those seeking full licensure. In any case, the NCE helps ensure a standard level of knowledge, and the majority of HCA members strongly support associate licensure.

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 DCCA is necessary to carry out associate licensure and advancements in the mental health profession.

Overall, SB 1444 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 SB 1444.

Sincerely,

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

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 8:14:07 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joanne Okika Shigeke Qinaau	Testifying for Pilina Center for Wellbeing	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou~

As a PhD student in clinical psychology at UHM, and a Kanaka Maoli born and raised on O`ahu, I see this bill as critically important for a number of reasons. I personally had a very challenging time finding opportunities in Hawai`i for when I graduate this summer, despite the rigor of my PhD program and the training reputation of my current internship at Harvard Medical School. Very few post-docs exist for PhDs to prepare for licensure, and finding the right match for goals, as well as the ability to pay basic bills, is shockingly difficult. It is unsustainable and particularly challenging for those of us from underprivileged backgrounds. This bill will at least partially address the reasons behind that difficulty, and why so many mental health professionals leave the islands even after training there.

In support of rural and neighbor island wellbeing: This proposal would expand the pool of providers on all islands, particularly on neighbor islands to help meet the demand for mental health services.

In support of maintaining our local community, which is dwindling each day, a challenge to survive, let alone thrive: This bill would improve on-the-job training and cultivate homegrown talent - encouraging folx to stay in Hawai`i and meet the unique needs of our community. It also means supervisors of licensure-seeking professionals will be compensated for their valuable time.

There is no aloha without mental health: Most importantly, this measure will benefit those seeking services by improving access and encouraging utilization of critical therapy services. We need MORE access to culturally conscious care, better paid providers, and fewer systemic barriers to creating community-based pipelines to wellbeing services.

I am in strong support of Associate Licensing of Mental Health Professionals and respectfully ask this committee to pass this bill.

Mahalo piha. I hope today you can make your ancestors, and future generations, proud.

Mālama pono,

Jo

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 9:21:35 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Catherine Okumura	Testifying for Ho'oulu Counseling	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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.

We understand the urgency of this request and appreciate your swift action to support this crucial legislation. Your efforts play a significant role in shaping the future of mental health care in Hawaii.



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

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

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

February 23, 2024 10:15 A.M. – Rm 229 and via VIDEO CONFERENCE

Testimony in Strong Support of SB1444 SD1 RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

The Hawaiian Islands Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (HIAMFT) strongly supports **SB1444 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. 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, **SB1444 SD1** 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.

These circumstances call for a change in the paradigm and practices of mental health care in Hawai'i. Our current model of mental health care does not adequately 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 care cannot be an afterthought.

SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS FOR CLARITY & CONSISTENT WITH PURPOSE

DRAFTING ERROR:

We note an erroneous reference to "mental health counseling" on p. 4, line 4 in the proposed amendment to the Marriage & Family Therapists chapter in HRS 451J; and believe what is meant is "marriage and family therapy."

RETAIN EXEMPTIONS for INTERNS; REMOVE NEED TO "GRANDFATHER" INTERNS; KEEP DEFINITIONS OF CLINICAL SUPERVISION:

To address previously asserted concerns from the DCCA Professional Vocational & Licensing Division over the grandfathering of current Marriage and Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling Interns; **we note that our intent in supporting this measure is NOT that interns be *required* to obtain their Associate License; but rather, that they be incentivized to do so because of the insurance reimbursements that will be enabled by holding such licenses.**

To be specific: except for Social Workers, this bill removes trainee exemptions from licensure **[for Marriage & Family Therapists: p.7, lines 18 – p.8 lines 2; p.11, lines 13-15; for Mental Health Counselors: p. 25, line 19 – p. 26, line 2; and for Psychologists: p. 33 lines 15 – p. 34, line 1, p. 35, lines 18-19]**. The removal of trainee license exemptions - in this draft - forces trainees to get the newly created "Associate License."

Forcing Associate licensure may be desirable for the DCCA in their efforts to monitor the professions, institute greater consumer protection measures, and to collect more licensing fees to aid in their operations - considerations to which we defer to the legislature and the DCCA. However, removing the

exemptions outlined above forces questions on what to do about the trainees currently engaged in supervised practice before the associate licensure is available; and how to handle conflicting definitions of “clinical supervision” for what seems to be just one available path toward full licensure.

If these exemptions are retained, there will no longer be a question about “grandfathering” current trainees, or whether the current definitions of “clinical supervision” in Chapter 451J-1 and 453D-7(a)(2) is still valid, since interns not seeking the associate licensure or insurance reimbursement can still practice under the current exemption.

We therefore recommend the removal of stricken language which repeal the licensure exemptions for “interns” in the process of receiving clinical supervision in their efforts to gain full licensure. By retaining these exemptions, the Associate License is treated as an option, not a requirement – and many of the concerns presented by the DCCA would no longer apply.

SUPPORT FOR FLEXIBILITY IN EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS:

To encourage flexibility - consistent with amendments made in this bill, as with the laws in other states – we support reinstating language that was removed in the SD1 to allow post-doctorate trainees in psychology to take their full licensure exam before completing their post-doctoral supervised training requirements.

It has been made apparent that this amendment was based on a mis-reading of its application to exam requirements for regular licensure, and not to the proposed provisional/associate-level licensure – as is evidenced by the Board of Psychology’s emphasis in prior testimony that a doctoral degree be completed first before applying for a *provisional* license. We agree but are cognizant that changes in the SD1 were made to the full licensure statute, and not to proposed language for Associate- Level Licensure.

Accordingly, we anticipate the Board of Psychology will offer an amendment similar to what they offered in HB1830 HD1, which we support, which is to include the following language after HRS 465-7(a)(3), as it relates to full licensure, on page 38, line 17, as follows:

“[.] provided further that those issued a provisional license pursuant to 465- shall be authorized to take the examination upon issuance of the provisional license.

Alternatively, we ask that the language from original SB1444, p. 38 lines 18-21, be reinserted into SB1444 SD1 on page 38, line 17 as follows:

“provided that nothing in this subsection shall be construed as requiring the applicant to complete the requirements of paragraph (2) to be eligible to take the examination required in paragraph (3).”

This can also be achieved by reverting to the original language provided in each of the house versions of HB1300 from the 2023 session, and reflected in HB1300 HD2, p.37, lines 18-20:

“The applicant shall not be required to complete the requirements of paragraph (2) to be eligible to take the examination required by paragraph (3).”

Removing these untimely testing requirements is consistent with the removal of testing requirements for Associate Licensees in Marriage and Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling from the last draft of this bill; thus clearing more financial and logistical burdens to potential providers.

This is important so Psychologists are more inclined to stay in Hawaii rather than move to the mainland where cost of living is significantly less and they are permitted the ability to sit for the exam much earlier.

Further justification for this change is grounded in the recommendation by the American Psychological Association (APA) that license applicants **take this exam as soon as they can after graduating**. The APA clearly states on its website¹ that *“In most jurisdictions, you’re qualified to sit for the test once you complete the educational requirements for your doctoral degree.”* (Emphasis added.).

POLICY POINTS TO ADDRESS CONCERNS PRESENTED BY THE DCCA PVL

In testimony on the earlier draft of this measure, the DCCA PVL stated a number of concerns relating to the need for additional regulation under Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) 26H and potential increased costs to consumers.

First, we note the extensive purpose language in this measure detailing the crisis-level need for mental health providers. While PVL states the intent of this provisional/associate-level licensure proposal is *“solely for the purpose of reimbursement”*; we respectfully submit that such a characterization unfairly casts the mental health professions as solely focused on profit. That is not why we became therapists; and we should not be required to work for thousands of hours for free, leaving droves of potential patients on waiting lists for at least 6 months or more, to prove otherwise. It is indeed in the public interest, and for the *“protection of public welfare”* that we support the limits of the brain drain of homegrown, culturally-competent talent to other jurisdictions that value them with provisional/associate-level licensure. Half the other states have NOT deemed such licenses to be harmful.

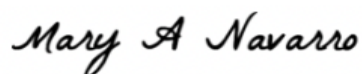
Second, the presumption that *“the costs of services provided by these individuals may increase and could possibly be passed to consumers”* is actually contrary to the reality. When insurance reimbursement is provided, patients would no longer need to pay out of pocket for these supervised services – as many supervisors require to compensate for their time providing such mentorship and service.

CONCERNS FROM INSURANCE INDUSTRY

We are also mindful of previous comments on this bill that it lacks “established criteria and scope of service” for which they ask more clarity to “define the circumstances that would be eligible for reimbursement.” We have discussed this with multiple providers licensed in other states who traditionally bill the supervised clinical services of Associate Licensees – outlined in great detail in each of the professions’ existing respective statutes - under Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) used by insurers as including: **CPT 90791 (initial interview); CPT 90832 (30 minutes); CPT 90834 (45 minutes); 90837 (60 minutes); 90847 (conjoint family therapy, 50 minutes); CPT 90846 (Family psychotherapy (without the patient present); CPT 90853 (Group psychotherapy)**. We hope this provides the clarity and assurance that such services indeed have a history of being covered in other states – which also supports justification to enable such service in Hawaii – especially for patients in serious need but without adequate coverage.

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

Sincerely,



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

¹<https://www.apa.org/gradpsych/2007/09/eppp#:~:text=In%20most%20jurisdictions%2C%20you're,requirements%20for%20your%20doctoral%20degree.>



Hawai'i Psychological Association

For a Healthy Hawai'i

P.O. Box 833
Honolulu, HI 96808

www.hawaiipsychology.org

Phone: (808) 521 -8995

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

February 23, 2024 10:15 A.M. – Rm 229 and via VIDEO CONFERENCE

Testimony in Strong Support of SB1444 SD1 RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

The Hawai'i Psychological Association (HPA) strongly supports SB1444 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.

PLEASE REVERT TO ORIGINAL LANGUAGE REGARDING PSYCHOLOGISTS' EPPP EXAM

The most immediate issue that needs to be addressed in this proposal is the financial hardship and delay during a psychologist's post-doctoral phase, and the timing of the license and examination application processes; namely – the Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology (EPPP). The American Psychological Association recommends that license applicants take this exam as soon as they can after graduating, and clearly states on its website that “In most jurisdictions, you're qualified to sit for the test once you complete the educational requirements for your doctoral degree.”¹ (Emphasis added.)

Currently, according to the Board of Psychology's administrative rules, applicants must complete their 1-year post-doctoral experience; apply for licensure; then be “seated” for the required examination (the EPPP); then pass it before they can be licensed. This process can lead to a many-month delay before they are allowed to practice as a psychologist. **Many licensure candidates apply to take the exam in another state (incurring further personal expense) so they can expedite the board of psychology review process by having their passing grade in hand when their application is reviewed by the Hawaii Board.**

Prior iterations of this proposal required the board to allow licensure candidates to take the exam as soon as they complete their doctorate, consistent with the purpose of this proposal in removing barriers to licensure. We believe this is consistent with the current Board of Psychology's view after the discussion at their last board meeting on February 2, 2024.

¹<https://www.apa.org/gradpsych/2007/09/eppp#:~:text=In%20most%20jurisdictions%2C%20you're.requirements%20for%20you%20r%20doctoral%20degree>

Accordingly, we anticipate the Board of Psychology will offer an amendment similar to what they offered in HB1830 HD1, which we support, which is to include the following language after HRS 465-7(a)(3), as it relates to full licensure, on page 38, line 17, as follows:

“[.]; provided further that those issued a provisional license pursuant to 465- shall be authorized to take the examination upon issuance of the provisional license.

Alternatively, we ask that the language from original SB1444, p. 38 lines 18-21, be reinserted into SB1444 SD1 on page 38, line 17 as follows:

“provided that nothing in this subsection shall be construed as requiring the applicant to complete the requirements of paragraph (2) to be eligible to take the examination required in paragraph (3).”

This can also be achieved by reverting to the original language provided in each of the house versions of HB1300 from the 2023 session, and reflected in HB1300 HD2, p.37, lines 18-20:

“The applicant shall not be required to complete the requirements of paragraph (2) to be eligible to take the examination required by paragraph (3).”

MORE BACKGROUND:

This bill expands access to much-needed high quality mental health services, provided by local practitioners, and will significantly increase the speed with which trained, qualified, credentialed, and culturally cognizant practitioners can enter the workforce and meet Hawaii’s demands. There is a critical shortage of mental health professionals in Hawaii, particularly in rural areas; and this bill helps to reduce some arbitrary and/or administrative obstacles to practicing here.

This proposal helps to alleviate several financial hardships psychology trainees in Hawaii typically face while on this path. New professionals seeking to complete their hours of supervised practice are having tremendous difficulty managing financially - due to Hawaii’s very high cost of living.

The associate licensing framework in this bill will authorize insurance reimbursement for work done by pre-licensed, “post-doc” psychology trainees. Post-docs often work in an agency or other setting where they are supervised closely by a licensed psychologist, but insurance plans vary greatly on whether they will reimburse the agency or supervisor for services provided in this way. Some post-docs end up working for free, while maintaining other jobs to survive. Many move to mainland states where associate-level licensure is already in place.

In addition to the scheduling of the EPPP exam discussed above, this bill also addresses unnecessary administrative barriers experienced by state-employed psychology post-docs. Current law allows non-licensed individuals who have earned their doctoral degree to be hired into state psychologist positions before licensure; however, these employees must obtain licensure within two years of hire, and then cease practicing if the license is not obtained in that time period. The state has interpreted this to mean they must be terminated from their state position if this occurs.

During the pandemic, the Board of Psychology did not meet for a prolonged period to approve several candidates’ licenses, and several state-employed psychologists lost their jobs due to no fault of their own. Practitioners at the state hospital and in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division were terminated. This is a wholly avoidable hardship for these individuals, and the clients they were serving. The language proposed in this bill would allow the board to give a state-employed psychologist more time to obtain their license under such extenuating circumstances; and would also help others who may need more time due to, for example, the need for maternity or other medical leave.

DCCA'S CONCERNS OVER CONSUMER COST

The extensive purpose language in this measure details the crisis-level need for mental health providers. While the DCCA Division on Professional & Vocational Licensing characterizes the intent of this proposal in their testimony as “*solely for the purpose of reimbursement*”; we respectfully submit that such a characterization unfairly casts the mental health professions as solely focused on profit. That is not why we became therapists; and we should not be required to work for thousands of hours for free, leaving droves of potential patients on waiting lists for at least 6 months or more, to prove otherwise. It is indeed in the public interest, and for the “*protection of public welfare*” that we support the limits of the brain drain of homegrown, culturally-competent talent to other jurisdictions that value them with provisional/associate-level licensure. Half the other states have NOT deemed such licenses to be harmful.

Second, the DCCA's presumption that “*the costs of services provided by these individuals may increase and could possibly be passed to consumers*” is actually contrary to the reality. When insurance reimbursement is provided, patients would no longer need to pay out of pocket for these supervised services – as many supervisors require to compensate for their time providing such mentorship and service.

Our intent in supporting this proposal is NOT to REQUIRE Associate Licensure; but to give trainees the option to obtain an Associate License that allows their services to be reimbursed. By retaining this option; and maintaining licensure exemptions for non-compensated interns, concern over consumer cost is lessened.

In this vein, we recommend the exemptions for interns be retained in the following sections – [**for Marriage & Family Therapists:** p.7, lines 18 – p.8 lines 2; p.11, lines 13-15; **for Mental Health Counselors:** p. 25, line 19 – p. 26, line 2; **and for Psychologists:** p. 33 lines 15 – p. 34, line 1, p. 35, lines 18-19].

CONCERNS FROM INSURANCE INDUSTRY

We are also mindful of comments on this bill from health insurers in prior hearings that this measure lacks “established criteria and scope of service” for which they ask more clarity to “define the circumstances that would be eligible for reimbursement.”

We have discussed this with multiple providers licensed in other states who traditionally bill the supervised clinical services of Associate Licensees – outlined in great detail in each of the professions' existing respective statutes - under Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) used by insurers as including: **CPT 90791 (initial interview); CPT 90832 (30 minutes); CPT 90834 (45 minutes); 90837 (60 minutes); 90847 (conjoint family therapy, 50 minutes); CPT 90846 (Family psychotherapy (without the patient present); CPT 90853 (Group psychotherapy)**. We hope this provides the clarity and assurance that such services do indeed have a history of being covered in other states – which also supports justification to enable such service in Hawaii – especially for patients in serious need but without adequate coverage.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this important bill, and for your commitment to Hawaii's mental health.

Sincerely,



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

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 10:09:20 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marissa Katz Bellani	Testifying for HPA	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 343, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB343 addresses these crucial issues by:

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.

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.

Strengthening Mental Health Care Delivery: Allowing psychologist license applicants to sit for licensing exams sooner and enabling the Board of Psychology to grant licensure waivers under certain conditions, SB343 streamlines the process of bringing qualified professionals into active service.

I firmly believe that the passage of SB343 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. We need more therapists in Hawai'i to improve the care for our people.

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

Sincerely,

Marissa Katz Bellani, LMHC, Music Therapist

marissamkatz@gmail.com

marissa@hpcollective.com

Helping Hawai'i Live Well

Testimony to the Committees for Commerce & Consumer Protection; and Judiciary February 23rd, 2024; Videoconference SB1444 SD1

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Aloha Chairs, Vice Chairs, and members of the Committees for Commerce & Consumer Protection, and Judiciary!

Mental Health America of Hawaii writes in strong support of SB1444 SD1 which establishes provisional or associate level licensure requirements for mental health specialties and authorizes insurance reimbursements in certain circumstances.

PRO BONO LEGAL COUNSEL

Paul Alston

Mental Health America of Hawai'i (MHAH), an affiliate of the renowned national organization, is a highly regarded 501(c)(3) non-profit organization serving the State of Hawai'i. For nearly 80 years, MHAH has been fulfilling its mission "to promote mental health & wellness through education, advocacy, service, and access to care" through its vision of 'mental wellness for all.' We endeavor to reduce the shame and stigma of mental illness and improve the overall care, treatment, and empowerment of those with or at risk for mental health challenges across all stages of life in Hawai'i.

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As someone who has witnessed firsthand the challenges in accessing locally based mental health care, I can attest to the profound impact that SB1444 SD1 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. This is particularly critical given the existing youth mental health crisis and ongoing trauma for those who were directly and indirectly impacted by the Maui fires.

We strongly urge you to pass this legislation, and we are grateful for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

Respectfully,



Bryan L. Talisayan
Executive Director

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2024 5:25:08 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bronson Teixeira	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I vote in support of this bill, thank you

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

SB1444

Friday, January 26, 2024

1:00 PM Conference Room 225 and Videoconference

My name is Jamy Nakanishi, and I am a University of Hawai'i at Manoa student. This testimony is in support of SB1444 as I am not only seeing a therapist for myself but am also a Social Work student who is looking into being a licensed counselor or therapist.

I am in support of this bill as I see a growing number of individuals who are in need of a licensed therapist and someone who has knowledge of the field they are in. There are many therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors, who may be licensed in their line of work but not many may have the knowledge of working with families or individuals with mental health issues. I have had my share of going through numerous therapists and psychiatrists until I found "the one" who really understands me, who is genuine with me, and who takes the time to listen and get to know me. I think if we get more therapists, counselors, psychologists, and psychiatrists who have a license and a degree, and those who are genuinely there to listen and get to know their clients, there would be more help for those who need it and hopefully and possibly can get out of a dark hole.

I strongly support this bill as it can give hope to getting more licensed psychologists on board in working with patients who have severe mental health illness.

I urge you for your support in passing this bill into law so we can stop the shortage of psychologists and psychiatrists, especially in the rural areas so we can give the people the help they need.

Thank you,

Jamy Nakanishi

JaydenMami12@yahoo.com

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 8:44:24 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

Support for SB1444 – Establishing Associate Licensure for Mental Health Professionals

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB1444 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.
2. **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.
3. **Current Provision in SB1444:**
 - o The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure as marriage and family therapists must have passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam.
 - o **Proposed Amendment:**
 1. **Remove the National Exam Requirement for Associate Licensure:** I propose amending the bill to eliminate the requirement of passing the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam for obtaining associate licensure. The requirement for passing this exam should remain for those seeking full licensure.

I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 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,

Dr. John Souza, Jr., LMFT, DMFT

Past President Hawaiian Islands Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 11:40:23 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vishwani Ram-Souza	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support for SB1444 – Establishing Associate Licensure for Mental Health Professionals

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

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- **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.
- **Current Provision in SB1444:**
 - The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure as marriage and family therapists must have passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam.
 - **Proposed Amendment:**
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Thank you for considering my testimony in support of this vital piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Dr. Vishwani Ram-Souza, LMFT, PhD.

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 2:12:36 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

Support for SB1444 – Establishing Associate Licensure for Mental Health Professionals

Aloha Committee Members,

I am writing to express my **strong support for Senate Bill 1444**, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB1444 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.

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o The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure as marriage and family therapists must have passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam.

o Proposed Amendment:

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I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 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,

Lori Stitt

UH Hilo student

MA Counseling Psychology - May 2024

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 2:12:55 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charmaine Higa McMillan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support for SB1444 – Establishing Associate Licensure for Mental Health Professionals

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB1444 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.
2. **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 SB1444 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,

Charmaine Higa McMillan, PhD

Licensed psychologist #1010

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 2:31:56 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Naghum Alfulaij	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support for SB1444 – Establishing Associate Licensure for Mental Health Professionals

Dear Committee Members,

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3. **Current Provision in SB1444:**
 - o The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure as marriage and family therapists must have passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam.
 - o **Proposed Amendment:**
 1. **Remove the National Exam Requirement for Associate Licensure:** I propose amending the bill to eliminate the requirement of passing the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam for obtaining associate licensure. The requirement for passing this exam should remain for those seeking full licensure.

I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 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,

Naghum Alfulaij, Ph.D.

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 3:24:08 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Natalia Werkoff	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing in support passing bill SB1444 SD1. I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker & Certified Substance Abuse Counselor currently working as one of two psychotherapists at a non-profit agency that serves thousands from our community. I have had to cut back my hours to a part time status due to burn out from working as the only psychotherapist at the agency for years because of lack of funding to hire more counselors.

It has historically been a challenge to access mental health and substance use services in a timely manner. Many people have to wait over 1 month to be seen due to lack of providers. This leads to deteriorating mental health, relapses, giving up on searching for help, overdosing, and suicide. Passing this bill would help so many people connect to services more efficiently by expanding the pool of trained providers. It would help decrease systemic barriers to our community in need and to those who want to provide therapeutic services as a career. I am motivated to help other social workers move forward towards their licensure and would be happy to offer clinical supervision to associate level therapists if this bill passes.

Thank you for your time and consideration on passing this bill,

Natalia Werkoff

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 3:48:26 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

Support for SB1444 – Establishing Associate Licensure for Mental Health Professionals

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB1444 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.
2. **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.
3. **Current Provision in SB1444:**
 - o The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure as marriage and family therapists must have passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam.
 - o **Proposed Amendment:**
 1. **Remove the National Exam Requirement for Associate Licensure:** I propose amending the bill to eliminate the requirement of passing the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam for obtaining associate licensure. The requirement for passing this exam should remain for those seeking full licensure.

I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 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,

Rachel Ferguson (Graduate student in UH Hilo Counseling Psychology master's degree program)

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 3:56:24 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tamar Kreps	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

I strongly support Senate Bill 1444 and am so happy to learn that you are considering it. As a mental health counseling trainee AND a local person and parent, I have seen firsthand how difficult it is for individuals and families to find qualified mental health providers in our state. Events of recent years from the pandemic to the Lahaina fire have only sharpened the need. This bill would do so much to help make mental health care accessible to all who need it in Hawai'i. It would also support those emerging professionals who have decided to provide these services, and encourage them to stay in our state and continue serving our local population.

Thank you for considering this vital piece of legislation.

Tamar Kreps

Ph.D.; M.A. candidate, University of Hawai'i at Hilo

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 4:08:05 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Krystine Ann Cabrera	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of SB 1444. I will be completing my MSW degree in May 2024 and one of the ongoing concerns among my cohort is the process of testing and licensure for social work. One of the biggest challenges we face is finding a workplace that provides the necessary supervision hours, which we have to pay for out of pocket. This often limits passionate social workers in their work and forces them to take on two or more jobs to afford the process. Unfortunately, some of my colleagues have had to seek licensing outside of the state for a more affordable option, which results in a loss of mental health workers providing services here in Hawai'i.

This bill would create more work opportunities for social workers and other mental health providers within the state. It would also ensure better quality supervision for new social workers who wish to work within the state. As a result, we would see an increase in mental health care within the state, which many communities here struggle to access.

Mahalo,

Krystine Cabrera
MSW Student

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 5:08:27 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jodie E. Gerson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB1444 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.
2. **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.
3. **Current Provision in SB1444:**
 - o The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure as marriage and family therapists must have passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam.
 - o **Proposed Amendment:**
 1. **Remove the National Exam Requirement for Associate Licensure:** I propose amending the bill to eliminate the requirement of passing the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam for obtaining associate licensure. The requirement for passing this exam should remain for those seeking full licensure.

I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 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.

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: SB1444 ESTABLISHING ASSOCIATE LICENSURE FOR MENTAL HEALTH
PROFESSIONALS

POSITION: In support of SB1444

Aloha Honorable Members of the Hawaii Legislature,

I am writing to express my support for SB1444, 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.

Furthermore, SB1444 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.

The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure as marriage and family therapists must have passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam. I propose amending the bill to eliminate the requirement of passing the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam for obtaining associate licensure. The requirement for passing this exam should remain for those seeking full licensure. 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. SB1444 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 SB1444 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
108 E Huapala Place,
Lahaina, HI 96761
Adrake8@hawaii.edu
801-361-1791

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 7:04:49 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jazlyn Bulatao	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges emerging professionals face in our field and the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB1444 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.
- 2. 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.
- 3. Current Provision in SB1444:**
 - The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure as marriage and family therapists must have passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam.
 - **Proposed Amendment:**
 - 1. Remove the National Exam Requirement for Associate Licensure:** I propose amending the bill to eliminate the requirement of passing the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam for obtaining associate licensure. The requirement for passing this exam should remain for those seeking full licensure.

I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 will be a significant step forward in enhancing the mental health 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,

Jazlyn Bulatao, BA

Support for SB1444 – Establishing Associate Licensure for Mental Health Professionals

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB1444 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.
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 - The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure as marriage and family therapists must have passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam.
 - **Proposed Amendment:**
 1. **Remove the National Exam Requirement for Associate Licensure:** I propose amending the bill to eliminate the requirement of passing the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam for obtaining associate licensure. The requirement for passing this exam should remain for those seeking full licensure.

I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 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,

Franklin de Gracia, MA-MFT

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 8:01:43 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Judith White	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This bill will help address key gaps in Hawaii's shortage of mental health providers, including availability of local and culturally sensitive providers. Please pass!

Judith C White, Psy. D.

Kapaa

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 8:54:02 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Steven P. Katz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support for SB1444 – Establishing Associate Licensure for Mental Health Professionals

Dear Committee Members,

I am not only a licensed therapist in Hawaii, I have been a Supervisor for Masters Degree holders who struggle to get experience in the field here in Hawaii, making it almost impossible to achieve licensure. Since COVID I have been turning away patients. as have most therapists here because there are not enough therapists to serve this epidemic of mental health struggles.

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB1444 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.
2. **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.
3. **Current Provision in SB1444:**
 - o The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure as marriage and family therapists must have passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam.
 - o **Proposed Amendment:**
 1. **Remove the National Exam Requirement for Associate Licensure:** I propose amending the bill to eliminate the requirement of passing the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam for obtaining associate licensure. The requirement for passing this exam should remain for those seeking full licensure.

I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 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

Steven P. Katz, LMFT

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 9:00:48 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Heidi Smoot	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support for SB1444 – Establishing Associate Licensure for Mental Health Professionals

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB1444 addresses these crucial issues by:

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 - o The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure as marriage and family therapists must have passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam.
 - o **Proposed Amendment:**
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I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 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,

Heidi Smoot

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 9:32:03 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alexander Seto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB1444 addresses these crucial issues by:

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.

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.

Current Provision in SB1444:

The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure as marriage and family therapists must have passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam.

Proposed Amendment:

Remove the National Exam Requirement for Associate Licensure: I propose amending the bill to eliminate the requirement of passing the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam for obtaining associate licensure. The requirement for passing this exam should remain for those seeking full licensure.

I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 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,

Alexander Seto, MSCP

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 10:27:48 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Sanders	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

David Sanders

1001 Queen St. Honolulu, HI

dsandman92@me.com

808-352-2855

2/20/2024

Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection,

I am writing to express my strong support for Bill SB1444 SD1, which focuses on the modernization of mental health practice in Hawai'i. This bill is crucial for aligning our state with nearly half of all states that already have an associate/training license, thus modernizing our practices to meet contemporary needs.

One of the key aspects of this bill is its emphasis on ensuring access to quality, culturally responsive care for our communities. Current provider-to-patient ratios in Hawai'i demonstrate a significant need for more mental health professionals, especially those who are locally trained and culturally sensitive. Recent local tragedies, such as the one in Lahaina, underscore the urgent need for mental health providers who understand and can address the unique needs of our diverse population.

Furthermore, organizations like the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) have highlighted the importance of culturally responsive care in improving mental health outcomes. Bill SB1444 SD1 supports this by fostering the growth of local professionals who can provide culturally competent care to our residents.

The bill also introduces interim licensing, which serves as a mechanism of accountability to ensure that pre-licensed therapists adhere to professional standards and complete their licensure hours effectively. This step is crucial in maintaining high standards of care and protecting the well-being of our communities.

Moreover, by supporting the growth of local mental health professionals through this bill, we can combat brain drain and retain our talented professionals in Hawai'i. Keeping these professionals in our state is essential for ensuring that our communities receive the mental health services they need and deserve.

In conclusion, I urge you to support Bill SB1444 SD1 for the modernization of mental health practice in Hawai'i. By doing so, we can improve access to quality, culturally responsive care, address the shortage of mental health professionals, and enhance accountability in the mental health field.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

David Sanders

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 12:04:59 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Myers	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB1444 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.

2. **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.

3. **Current Provision in SB1444:**

o The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure as marriage and family therapists must have passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam.

o Proposed Amendment:

1. **Remove the National Exam Requirement for Associate Licensure:** I propose amending the bill to eliminate the requirement of passing the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam for obtaining associate licensure. The requirement for passing this exam should remain for those seeking full licensure.

I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 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

Mary Myers, PhD

Support for SB1444 – Establishing Associate Licensure for Mental Health Professionals

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB1444 addresses these crucial issues by:

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3. **Current Provision in SB1444:**
 - The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure as marriage and family therapists must have passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam.
 - **Proposed Amendment:**
 1. **Remove the National Exam Requirement for Associate Licensure:** I propose amending the bill to eliminate the requirement of passing the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam for obtaining associate licensure. The requirement for passing this exam should remain for those seeking full licensure.

I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 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,

Diana Kilguss

MFT Graduate student

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 7:10:12 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caroline Francoise Acra	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB1444 addresses these crucial issues by:

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o Proposed Amendment:

1. **Remove the National Exam Requirement for Associate Licensure:** I propose amending the bill to eliminate the requirement of passing the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam for obtaining associate licensure. The requirement for passing this exam should remain for those seeking full licensure.

I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 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,

Caroline Francoise Acra, Ph.D.

Licensed Clinical Psychologist

PSY-1901

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 8:04:50 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB1444 addresses these crucial issues by:

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 - o **Proposed Amendment:**
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I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 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,

Britt Young, M.A., LMFT

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 9:14:51 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cleveland T. McQueen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support for SB1444 – Establishing Associate Licensure for Mental Health Professionals

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

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 - o The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure as marriage and family therapists must have passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam.
 - o **Proposed Amendment:**
 1. **Remove the National Exam Requirement for Associate Licensure:** I propose amending the bill to eliminate the requirement of passing the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam for obtaining associate licensure. The requirement for passing this exam should remain for those seeking full licensure.

I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 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,

Cleveland T. McQueen

CSAC, Marriage and Family Intern

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 9:43:18 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kendyl Oshiro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444 SD1, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i. This bill will increase access to care for those within our communities who are in need of mental health services and encourage graduate students to stay in Hawai'i, especially with the high cost of living and high student loan repayments. The COVID-19 pandemic increased the need for care and I truly believe this bill will help to address the service gap.

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

Sincerely,

Kendyl Oshiro, Doctoral Clinical Psychology Candidate, (808) 348-4439

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 9:59:28 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julia Noelle Hall	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support for SB1444 – Establishing Associate Licensure for Mental Health Professionals

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I am a Native Hawaiian residing the Big Island of Hawai'i who went to the mainland to acquire my MA in Counseling Psychology with the intention of coming home to serve my community. Due to the challenges and limitations I faced as a pre-licensed professional trying to find employment, I acquired my LMHCA through Washington state to be able diversify my professional development. My goal is to eventually open a Hawai'i branch for the company I work for to provide mental health services for Hawai'i residents. Establishing this bill will allow me to support and guide qualified emmerging professionals like myself so they don't feel forced to outsource employment opportunities from out of state to suport their professional goals.

I have both witnessed and expereinced the firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB1444 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.
- 2. 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.
- 3. Current Provision in SB1444:**
 - The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure as marriage and family therapists must have passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam.
 - **Proposed Amendment:**

1. **Remove the National Exam Requirement for Associate Licensure:** I propose amending the bill to eliminate the requirement of passing the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam for obtaining associate licensure. The requirement for passing this exam should remain for those seeking full licensure.

I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 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,

Julia Noelle Hall, LMHCA

Support for SB1444 – Establishing Associate Licensure for Mental Health Professionals

Aloha e Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB1444 addresses these crucial issues by:

1. **Creating Pathways for Emerging Professionals:** By establishing associate licensure, this bill provides an essential steppingstone 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.
2. **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.
3. **Current Provision in SB1444:**
 - The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure as marriage and family therapists must have passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam.
 - **Proposed Amendment:**
 1. **Remove the National Exam Requirement for Associate Licensure:** I propose amending the bill to eliminate the requirement of passing the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam for obtaining associate licensure. The requirement for passing this exam should remain for those seeking full licensure.

I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 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.

Me ka ha'aha'a,



Lauren A. Melendez, LAMFT, MS

Pre-Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (Hawai'i)

Licensed Associate Marriage and Family Therapist (AZ-10744)

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 11:04:02 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristina Silva-Pedrero	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair San Buenaventura and Committee Members,

My name is Kristina Silva-Pedrero. I am an MSW student at the Thompson School of Social Work. **I am in strong support of SB1444.** I intend on working in the mental health field and, ultimately, obtaining my LCSW. I was also impacted by the Lahaina wildfires.

Since the wildfires, myself and family have struggled with our mental health and although I have access to a therapist, my family members do not. This bill would help local Hawaiian families like mine have access to mental healthcare. It would also provide a wider breadth of job security for graduating students seeking employment in this field preventing young adults from going to the continent for sustainable work.

Mahalo for your kokua and all the hard work you've put into this legislative session.

With Aloha,

Kristina Silva-Pedrero

Support for SB1444 – Establishing Associate Licensure for Mental Health Professionals

Dear Committee Members,

As a licensed clinical psychologist and clinical training director in Hawaii, am writing to express my very strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB1444 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.
2. **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.
3. **Current Provision in SB1444:**
 - The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure must have passed the licensing exam.
 - **Proposed Amendment:**
 1. **Remove the National Exam Requirement for Associate Licensure:** I propose amending the bill to eliminate the requirement of passing the EPPP or other licensing exam for obtaining associate licensure. The requirement for passing this exam should remain for those seeking full licensure.

I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 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,

Lianne Philhower, PsyD, MPH

Lianne T. Philhower, PsyD, MPH, C-DBT

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 11:44:04 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sean W. Scanlan, Ph.D.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha. I am writing to share my strong support for SB1444. There's no question that there's a need for more psychologists in Hawai`i, and it's silly that we have these trained professionals who are awaiting passing a multiple choice test (the EPPP) that can't help the public. Passing this is not the only solution, but it one of the steps that other states have successfully taken. Mahalo nui.

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 1:07:07 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

Support for SB1444 – Establishing Associate Licensure for Mental Health Professionals

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB1444 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.
2. **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.
3. **Current Provision in SB1444:**
 - o The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure as marriage and family therapists must have passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam.
 - o **Proposed Amendment:**
 1. **Remove the National Exam Requirement for Associate Licensure:** I propose amending the bill to eliminate the requirement of passing the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam for obtaining associate licensure. The requirement for passing this exam should remain for those seeking full licensure.

I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 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,

Emily Powers, Intern Mental Health Counselor, Hilo HI

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 1:37:00 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Matthew Johnson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support for SB1444 – Establishing Associate Licensure for Mental Health Professionals

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB1444 addresses these crucial issues by:

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.

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.

Current Provision in SB1444:

The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure as marriage and family therapists must have passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam.

Proposed Amendment:

Remove the National Exam Requirement for Associate Licensure: I propose amending the bill to eliminate the requirement of passing the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam for obtaining associate licensure. The requirement for passing this exam should remain for those seeking full licensure.

I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 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,

Matthew Johnson, MS Associate Mental Health Counselor

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 2:54:18 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alyssa Kratz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

The mental health crisis in America continues to worsen. It is imperative that our legislature take every action possible to increase the available number of mental health practitioners in our state. This bill would increase the number of available mental health clinicians practicing in Hawai'i while making mental health services available to more individuals in our state, who are in desperate need of services. This is a LIFE SAVING bill. It would be irresponsible of the committee not to pass it. Unlicensed clinicians will be supervised by licensed ones. This will benefit both the emerging clinicians, who will gain valuable skills by working in their field while working towards their licensure. This will mean that once these professionals become licensed, they will have had more experience and be more effective in their fields. Perhaps more importantly, patients seeking mental health care will experience an increased availability of practitioners, greater ease in receiving necessary care, and improved mental health outcomes. Improved mental health for Hawai'i's population could mean lower rates of addiction within our state, lower rates of suicide, improved family outcomes, amongst many other benefits.

Current Provision in SB1444:

The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure as marriage and family therapists must have passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam.

Proposed Amendment:

Remove the National Exam Requirement for Associate Licensure:

I propose amending the bill to eliminate the requirement of passing the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam for obtaining associate licensure. The requirement for passing this exam should remain for those seeking full licensure.

Increased access to mental health services stands to greatly benefit ALL of Hawai'i's communities. While the skills gained by new professionals will serve to produce highly skilled licensed clinicians in our state, what is MOST important to consider is the impact that increased mental health services will have on Hawaii's communities, families, and individuals. A great amount of work, service, and hope can be provided by those individuals who are yet unlicensed. Hawai'i needs mental health services! Please pass this bill. Thank you for your consideration of this testimony and others like it.

Mental Health Matters,

Alyssa Kratz, MSW, Pau Hana Counseling

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 4:00:56 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to wholeheartedly endorse SB1444 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 SB1444 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. SB1444 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 SB1444 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 SB1444 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

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 8:09:28 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
KRISTIN AIONA	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Kristin Aiona. I'm a public school teacher here in Hilo and I am also a Master's in Social Work student with UH Mānoa's distance learning program. I went into social work because there is a tremendous need to help people. As a teacher, I see it every day. I cannot do enough as a teacher. I was born and raised in Hilo and have been teaching at Big Island high schools for almost 20 years. While I have so much to offer as a social worker or a therapist, I cannot imagine how I am going to fulfill my post-graduate hours to become a licensed social worker when it pays so little. The people of Hawai'i need practiced, skilled social workers who understand the culture and the way of life here. I can do that and I can be that person, but we need to get paid for our training and post graduate work. UH Hilo has increased their Master's mental health program so more people can be trained, which is amazing, but their efforts will be moot if this bill doesn't pass. Do what the people of Hawai'i need and pass this bill. Mahalo for your time.

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 11:28:21 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caroline Kunitake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB1444 SD1. Please support this bill.

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 2:19:32 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
nancy sidun	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support this bill and hopeful it would will pass.

Respectfully,

Dr. Nancy Sidun

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 6:14:52 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Danni Sutana Gardner	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.

Thank you for your consideration,

Danni

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 6:41:35 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emma Ishihara	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the esteemed 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.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to testify in support of this bill,

Emma.

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 6:56:15 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

Support for SB1444 – Establishing Associate Licensure for Mental Health Professionals

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB1444 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.

2. **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.

3. **Current Provision in SB1444:**

o The bill stipulates that individuals seeking associate-level licensure as marriage and family therapists must have passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam.

o **Proposed Amendment:**

1. **Remove the National Exam Requirement for Associate Licensure:** I propose amending the bill to eliminate the requirement of passing the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam for obtaining associate licensure. The requirement for passing this exam should remain for those seeking full licensure.

I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 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,

Emily Polk, graduate student of Counseling Psychology at UH at Hilo

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 7:15:33 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection,

I am writing to express my strong support for Bill SB1444 SD1, which focuses on the modernization of mental health practice in Hawai'i. This bill is crucial for aligning our state with nearly half of all states that already have an associate/training license, thus modernizing our practices to meet contemporary needs.

One of the key aspects of this bill is its emphasis on ensuring access to quality, culturally responsive care for our communities. Current provider-to-patient ratios in Hawai'i demonstrate a significant need for more mental health professionals, especially those who are locally trained and culturally sensitive. Recent local tragedies, such as the one in Lahaina, underscore the urgent need for mental health providers who understand and can address the unique needs of our diverse population.

Furthermore, organizations like the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) have highlighted the importance of culturally responsive care in improving mental health outcomes. Bill SB1444 SD1 supports this by fostering the growth of local professionals who can provide culturally competent care to our residents.

The bill also introduces interim licensing, which serves as a mechanism of accountability to ensure that pre-licensed therapists adhere to professional standards and complete their licensure hours effectively. This step is crucial in maintaining high standards of care and protecting the well-being of our communities.

Moreover, by supporting the growth of local mental health professionals through this bill, we can combat brain drain and retain our talented professionals in Hawai'i. Keeping these professionals in our state is essential for ensuring that our communities receive the mental health services they need and deserve.

In conclusion, I urge you to support Bill SB1444 SD1 for the modernization of mental health practice in Hawai'i. By doing so, we can improve access to quality, culturally responsive care,

address the shortage of mental health professionals, and enhance accountability in the mental health field.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Fabio Cardoso

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 7:56:51 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christy Chadwick	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill as a pre-licensed clinician because it would enhance access to mental health care, offer insurance reimbursements for pre-licensed clinicians working towards licensure, and helps offer greater support and training for pre-licensed clinicians seeking licensure.

Thank you,

Christy Chadwick, M.S.D.E., MA MFT

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 8:23:26 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diane Logan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

As a clinical psychologist, I would like the opportunity to supervise postdoctoral trainees in pursuit of licensure and to ensure adequate training and familiarity with our unique patient populations in Hawai‘i. Without this Bill passing, I am unable to do that as there is no mechanism to reimburse the trainee or the supervisor for their work. I have an ongoing waitlist due to staffing shortages across Hawai‘i so volunteering hours is not feasible. Passing this Bill will allow for direct supervised access to retain our well-trained providers in Hawai‘i rather than requiring them to relocate to the continent for their hours and hope they return a few years later.

As a coordinator of the Maui Strong Mental Health Response, we could have (and still could) greatly expand services accessible to those affected by the disaster if this bill was passed. We continue to rely on overextended licensed providers and well-intentioned but uninformed providers from the continent to attempt to meet the increased need. Even before this tragedy, waitlists and provider shortages created unacceptable delays in mental health care in our state.

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 Hawai‘i 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.

Thank you for your consideration,

Diane Logan, Ph.D., ABAP, CSAC, ICDAC

Clinical Psychologist

Board Certified in Addiction Psychology

Past-President, Hawai'i Psychological Association

Past-President, Hawai'i Island Psychological Association

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 9:03:44 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stella Caban	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444 SD1, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i. I am currently an Master's of Social work student in the distance education program at University of Hawai'i Mānoa. I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB343 addresses these crucial issues by:

- 1. 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.**
- 2. 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.**
- 3. Allowing psychologist license applicants to sit for licensing exams sooner and enabling the Board of Psychology to grant licensure waivers under certain conditions, SB343 streamlines the process of bringing qualified professionals into active service.**

I firmly believe that the passage of SB343 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. I am hoping with the passage of this bill I am able to practice in my final year as an MSW intern in my specialization. Access to mental health and behavioral health services is in critical need and greatly underserved especially in the outer islands.

Thank you for considering my testimony in support of this vital piece of legislation. Together, we can make a significant impact on the mental health landscape of our state. I appreciate your prompt response to this urgent call.

Sincerely,

Stella Caban

MSW student and intern

cabans@hawaii.edu

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 9:52:59 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brian Goodyear	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senators,

I am writing in support of Associate Licensing of Mental Health Professionals and respectfully ask this committee to pass SB1444. This proposal will expand the pool of mental health providers on all islands, particularly on neighbor islands, and will help meet the growing demand for mental health services. As a clinical psychologist, I am very much aware of the current shortage of mental health providers across the state.

This bill would also improve on-the-job training and cultivate homegrown talent - encouraging clinicians to stay in Hawaii and meet the unique needs of our community.

Most importantly, this measure will benefit members of the community seeking mental health services by improving access and encouraging utilization of critical therapy services.

Thank you for your consideration of this important measure,

Brian Goodyear, Ph.D.

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 10:01:38 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lucas Morgan, PHD	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support for SB343 – Establishing Associate Licensure for Mental Health Professionals

Dear Committee Members,

I am a doctoral-level licensed psychologist originally from and practicing in Hawai'i, and I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 343, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB343 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.
2. **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.
3. **Strengthening Mental Health Care Delivery:** Allowing psychologist license applicants to sit for licensing exams sooner and enabling the Board of Psychology to grant licensure waivers under certain conditions, SB343 streamlines the process of bringing qualified professionals into active service.

I firmly believe that the passage of SB343 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,

Lucas Paul Kawika Morgan, PhD, Licensed Psychologist and concerned community and family member

Kilolani Counseling, 6650 Hawaii Kai Dr. #208, Honolulu HI, 96825

808-650-3090

Support for SB1444 SD1

– Establishing Associate Licensure for Mental Health Professionals

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1444, which seeks to establish provisional or associate-level licensure for marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists in Hawai'i.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by emerging professionals in our field, as well as the gaps in mental health services accessible to our communities. SB1444 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.
2. **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.
3. **Strengthening Mental Health Care Delivery:** Allowing psychologist license applicants to sit for licensing exams sooner and enabling the Board of Psychology to grant licensure waivers under certain conditions, SB1444 streamlines the process of bringing qualified professionals into active service.

I firmly believe that the passage of SB1444 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,

Allana Coffee, PHD drcoffee@hpcollective.com (808) 258-2287

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 11:20:28 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM



Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Damon Ackerman	Testifying for The Autistic Therapist, LLC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support 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 neighboring 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.

Thank you for your consideration,

Damon Ackerman, LMHC

MHC-769

LATE

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 12:04:01 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 343, 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 hurdles 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 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 own 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, then 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. Because of the high cost of living in Hawai'i, many of our students simply 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 SB343 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 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, Department of Psychology, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

ATTN: HLT, CPC, FIN

Hearing Date: February 23rd, 2024. 1015 hours

From: Madison Kramer, MSW Student and community member

LATE

POSITION: SUPPORT

As a graduate student in the field of social work, I can tell you firsthand how greatly SB1444 impacts the community and the practitioners attempting to complete licensure requirements. By enacting this bill, you would allow the residents of Hawai'i the access to more professionals. Professionals who are fresh out of school, equipped with knowledge, and supported by supervisors, and able to alleviate some of the mental health care crisis we are seeing. As I am sure you are all aware, an increase in the need for mental health service providers skyrocketed as a byproduct of the COVID-19 pandemic. Honolulu Civil Beat reported the ratio of clients to therapists is 320-to-1. This is simply unsustainable if we as a state are unable to provide efficient and appropriate intervention.

SB1444 would enable professionals seeking further licensure to improve their quality of service without the excessive financial burden of being required to complete clinical hours uncompensated. This would also help encourage or incentivize more people from the Hawaiian community to pursue careers in the mental health and social working fields. One of the largest hinderances of becoming a mental health professional in Hawai'i is dealing with the high cost of living, all while being expected to be an unpaid intern. Allowing mental health interns to earn an income would allow more people to seek this field as a career option. With more local mental health professionals, more people within the community have access to the care they need and deserve. More social workers and mental health professionals would only help the community and it should be in everyone's best interest to encourage this growth through the adoption of this bill and others alike.

The requirements of the student or "associate/provisional licensed" individual that are outlined in the bill are quantifiable, just, reasonable, and provide accountability for interns until official licensure can be completed. The responsibilities outlined in this bill are ones every mental health field student is vastly aware of and is unlikely to omit from practices. This opportunity allows the community to be served without the financial strain for post-graduate clinical practitioners. The ethical standards in the mental health professions are supportive of implementation of the provisional license requirements that would benefit both new practitioners and clients/constituents of Hawai'i. I urge you to carefully consider your support of this proposal. Any expansion of the law would only enhance the mental health care fields and better serve the people of Hawai'i.

Respectfully,

Madison Kramer

February 22, 2024

LATE

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 4:03:32 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Taryn Itagaki	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.

Thank you for your consideration,

Taryn Itagaki

February 23, 2024
Testimony of Stacy Iler
Student of Masters of Social Work

LATE

SB 1444 A Measure Relating to Mental Health
Chair Keohokalole, Vice Chair Fukunaga, and members of the Commerce and Consumer
Protection Committee.

My name is Stacy Iler and I am a full time student studying social work. I will graduate with my Master's degree in May and plan to move into clinical work practicing therapy. The purpose of my testimony is to support our local government in making choices that will greatly benefit our community by showing how this bill directly affects my life and the lives of those who I will serve.

According to county health rankings in 2022, there were 284 mental health providers for every 100,000 individuals in Hawaii. This results in long waitlists and barriers to entry. The reality of our current licensure process is that most people have to pay out of pocket to compensate their mentors for clinical training. The reason for this is because pre-licensed therapists are not able to bill insurance for services, so there exists little incentive for current therapists to train new clinicians because they won't be fairly compensated. This is a current barrier to licensure which extremely limits the number of people who seek clinical licensure. In three short months, I myself will be looking for a job and looking for clinical supervision. Passage of SB1444 would dramatically increase the opportunities available to me to find appropriate clinical training by helping to remove barriers of time and money.

I stand in strong support of Senate Bill 1444 Relating to Mental Health. This bill would help compensate mental health professionals under supervision for their impactful service to our community and would therein, increase opportunity and access for individuals to seek clinical licensure. In our modern world, issues of economic strife, global pandemic, grief, violence, discrimination, and trauma increasing affect our community. Increased access to mental health services will only benefit our community and for many is essential for personal health.

Thank you so much for considering my words. I strongly urge the committee to pass Senate Bill 1444 for the health and wellbeing of our community.

LATE

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 6:32:41 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hannah Diaz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We must support the expanding mental health needs of the community. To do so, we should expand access to providers. As a social work graduate student, I am dismayed by the challenges of gaining a clinical position where I can be part of community support. Please pass this bill to promote the creation of positions where social workers and other mental health providers can offer services.

SB-1444-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2024 7:53:39 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/23/2024 10:15:00 AM



Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ELIZABETH K TAITANO	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.

Thank you for your consideration,

Elizabeth K. Taitano, Ph.D.

Licensed Clinical Psychologist