

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 07 2025

RE: S.B. No. 474
S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2025
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs, to which was referred S.B. No. 474 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO PSYCHOLOGISTS,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to require clinical psychologists employed by the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to obtain licensure within ten years from the date of employment.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

Your Committee received testimony in opposition to this measure from the Hawai'i Psychological Association and one individual.

Your Committee received comments on this measure from Roar Cares.

Your Committee finds that a disproportionate number of those in Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation custody have a mental health diagnosis, and of those, the primary request the Department receives from inmate patients is the need for counseling and therapeutic relationships. Although non-licensed psychologists cannot diagnose independently, they are legally



allowed to counsel and educate patients. According to the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, over the past three years the Department has been unable to retain a significant number of their clinical psychologists as they have been unable to pass the Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology within the required two-year time frame. The current two-year licensure requirement impacts the Department's ability to retain invaluable mental health professionals who serve their inmate-residents suffering from severe mental illness as well as those in acute crisis. This measure will allow the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's post-doctoral psychologists to address the critically important mental health needs of those in the Department's custody and care while they obtain the didactic reasoning to pass this increasingly difficult licensure exam.

Your Committee notes the opposition and concerns raised in the testimony of the Hawaii Psychological Association, asserting that although there is a recognized severe shortage of psychologists in the State, lowering standards for the State's most vulnerable populations risks doing more harm than good.

In weighing these factors, your Committee finds that amendments are necessary to balance the imminent need for more psychologists working in state correctional facilities and the concerns from the mental health provider community regarding the maintenance of strict licensure standards to protect the integrity of the profession.

Accordingly, your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Changing the proposed time limit in which psychologists practicing in correctional facilities must obtain licensure from ten years to five years;
- (2) Changing the sunset date of July 1, 2035, to July 1, 2030; and
- (3) Inserting an effective date of July 1, 2077, to encourage further discussion.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and



purpose of S.B. No. 474, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 474, S.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Public Safety and
Military Affairs,



BRANDON J.C. ELEFANTE, Chair



