



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
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By
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SB 2877 SD1 HD2 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELORS

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Cullen, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on SB 2877 SD1 HD2. The University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UH Hilo) writes in strong support of this bill. The proposed change in the mental health counselor licensure law is directly relevant to our graduates in the Masters of Arts Program in Counseling Psychology (Specialization: Clinical Mental Health Counseling), as they are trained to be eligible for this license. The current version of the law unintentionally placed the 6-credit fieldwork requirement ("Practicum Intern Experience" with a total of 300 direct client hours) as a separate requirement from the 48-credit curriculum requirement, thereby changing the overall requirement to 54 credits. As the intent of the law was to require a 48-credit training, which is consistent with the licensing laws of other states, SB 2877 SD1 HD2 will fix this important flaw.

In addition, we strongly support the proposed language change in HRS §453D-7(a)(1)(F), on page 6, line 8, which references the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM), from "DSM-IV" to "DSM." The "IV" refers to the edition of the DSM to be used by mental health providers, and is updated once every several years, including the edition designation. By changing the designation from DSM-IV to DSM, the bill keeps the law current without requiring the statute to be changed on a periodic basis.

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

We appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony and fully support this bill.