

Workforce Development Committee  
SB 2357  
Testimony in Opposition

Chair Wobbema and members of the Workforce Development committee,

I write today **in opposition to SB 2357** relating to the consolidation of the multiple mental health licensing boards into one composite board. I am a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor, Certified Supervisor, and have been licensed and practicing in North Dakota since 2016.

I have the utmost respect for my colleagues across the disciplines and deep appreciation for the work they do to provide care for the citizens of our state. My opposition to this consolidation should not be misconstrued as opposition to the other professions.

There are several reasons that I am opposed to consolidating our licensing boards into one composite board:

Firstly, there is the issue with diminished specialization. While there is some overlap in our orientations and ethics, the different mental health disciplines do have unique training, scopes of practice, and ethical considerations. A consolidated board risks diluting this specialized knowledge, potentially leading to inconsistent or inadequate oversight. Specialized boards are better equipped to understand nuanced issues within their specific field, ensuring greater accountability to practice and ethical standards, and to public safety. By consolidating the boards, you introduce risk for less thorough review of complaints and disciplinary actions.

Secondly, each mental health profession has unique concerns and needs. Consolidating these boards would diminish the individual voice and advocacy of each profession, potentially impacting their ability to shape regulations and policies relevant to their field.

Lastly, as far as I am aware, each of the boards in our state are active, meet regularly, and provide the appropriate support to the practitioners they oversee. There are more than 3,500 licensed mental health professionals in our state, and that is just considering Professional Counselors, Marriage and Family Therapists, and Social Workers, since the remaining two boards do not have their list of licensees posted for the public. A board of 11 individuals is inadequate to meet the needs of current and prospective licensees.

Acknowledging that SB 2357 was introduced by two of the members of this committee, I respectfully ask you to reconsider this proposed consolidation, and recommend a **DO NOT PASS**, so that the mental health licensing boards retain their independence and integrity as separate entities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Schafer  
Fargo