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Subject: Testimony Regarding Senate Bill

Dear Senate Workforce Development Committee:

I am writing to express my opposition for Senate Bill 2357, which proposes the creation of a composite mental health licensing board and removal of the specialized boards for counselors, psychologists, substance abuse counselors, social workers, and marriage and family therapists. As a future counselor in my final semester at North Dakota State University who will be applying for my own licensure soon, I OPPOSE this bill as it would weaken the meaningful action possible for professions in each unique area of mental health service as well as bring about undue prolonging of licensure for upcoming, progressing, and much needed providers.

First, in working to complete my degree as a clinical mental health counseling, I have needed to delve into the distinctive educational contexts and the code of ethics of the counseling profession, which has refined my abilities to provide psychotherapy techniques and approaches best suited to a wide range of individuals and needs, differing from that of a social worker who possesses crucial knowledge of social assistance or a psychologist who carries expertise in human psychology and assessment. While there are some similarities between mental health care providers, through collaboration I have come to value these different perspectives, each informed by their own distinctive educational contexts and code of ethics. If the licensing boards are dismantled, it would limit the meaningful action that could be taken to improve or address concerns according to their individual viewpoints. It is imperative that these boards remain led by those that understand the intricacies of and developments in their respective fields, increasing the likelihood of impactful decision-making and continued integrity that is desperately needed in our state.

Next, the bill would not only debilitate meaningful action for licensure reputability, but it would also create undue prolonging for licensing, increasing the demands onto a single board to manage and provide timely responses for all mental health professionals. The prospective mental health providers I have met through my program have made significant time and financial sacrifices in hopes of helping others in our communities. The idea that we would be unable to receive a license for many months, after years to complete this advanced degree, is troublesome. I have always appreciated the efficiency of our state's systems, a no-nonsense approach to securing the best people to work in our state. This bill would cause

excessive strain on mental health licensure, making it difficult to provide mental health services to North Dakota citizens.

In sum, I strongly urge you to OPPOSE Senate Bill 2357. Thank you for your time and consideration in support of mental health professionals and those we serve.

Sincerely,

Teresa BlackCloud