

Alaska State Legislature

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Senate Bill 116

Associate and Professional Counselors

"An Act relating to the Board of Professional Counselors; and relating to licensing of associate counselors."

SPONSOR STATEMENT

Senate Bill 116 allows qualified candidates to obtain licensure as Associate Counselors and creates a pathway towards full accreditation as Licensed Professional Counselors in Alaska. Currently over 65% of states offer a pre-licensing process that is overseen by its professional state board. Creating a tiered system will help align Alaska with national standards for professional counselor licensure while creating a more structured process for licensee applicants while they complete the required exam and supervised experience.

This tiered licensure system would identify and address any gaps in training or experience while ensuring that counselors are providing services that are ethical and effective. It would attract and retain talented professionals to the state by providing opportunities for career advancement and professional development.

Ensuring Associate Counselors have met a minimum standard of training and experience would bolster public confidence in the counseling profession, reduce the stigma around mental health, and encourage more Alaskans to seek help when they need it. Providing guidance and support for those working towards licensure will improve the quality of care for patients, particularly in rural or remote areas where access to mental health services may be limited.

I urge my colleagues of the 33rd Legislature to support Senate Bill 116 to streamline the steps toward obtaining full licensure for Associate Counselors, and in turn, help Alaskans obtain the mental health services they are seeking.