



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Commerce, Community,
and Economic Development

BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS

P.O. Box 110806
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0806
Main: 907.465.2550
Fax: 907.465.2974

April 28th, 2023

To Whom it May Concern,

Alaska Board of Professional Counselors Support for HB 126 and SB 116

The Board of Professional Counselors supports House Bill 126 and Senate Bill 116 and the creation of an Associate Counselor license as this will allow for regulation of individuals under supervision, provide protection for supervisees and the hours they accrue on their pathway to full licensure, and will bring Alaska's licensure process for Professional Counselors more in line with national standards.

Currently, the Board of Professional Counselors does not regulate individuals under supervision as they are working towards full licensure. It is only when they apply for licensure and provide a form that verifies the total amount of supervision that has been accrued over a period of at least two years that it is declared that supervision has taken place. The creation of the associate license would require prospective licensees to apply prior to beginning supervision and to provide the board with a supervised practice plan. This will provide a clear point from when supervision may begin and will provide a professional identity for clinicians working under supervision. There have been numerous instances in which an applicant provides documentation of their supervision at the end of the requisite two-year period, only to find out that their supervisor was not approved to provide supervision to Professional Counselor applicants. This leads to the applicant needing to restart the entire process which can set their professional career back by years.

Through requiring prior approval to begin supervision, applicants will have the assurance that their supervision hours will count towards full licensure and that they have a linear process in which they can work toward licensure at the independent level. As the board has discussed the changes to the supervision model they intend to implement, among these changes is the requirement for quarterly reporting of supervision hours. Several states require monthly or quarterly reports of supervised experience to be provided as an associate level clinician is working towards full licensure. By requiring quarterly reporting, the board will have a timeline of supervision accrued and supervisees will be able to maintain an official, ongoing record of their supervised experience. At this time, if the supervisee's supervisor is unable or unwilling to

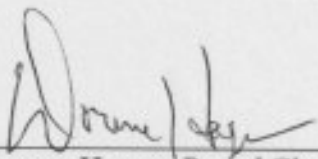
sign off on their hours at the end of their supervision period, there is no way to verify that the supervision hours occurred, which would render them void.

At this time, 65% of states have a tiered licensure model for Professional Counselors. This includes the regulation of associates, trainees, interns, and conditionally licensed clinicians. By creating this license type and establishing standards congruent to most states, this will allow for further portability for individuals, such as spouses of active-duty military, who are in the process of working toward full licensure in their current state and must relocate to Alaska. Currently there is no way to transfer out of state supervision hours to count toward Alaskan licensure. Prospective applicants that do not hold an equivalent license to the Professional Counselor license are advised to either stay in their current state until they qualify for an independent license in that state and then apply for licensure by credentials once they obtain the independent out of state license, or to begin their supervision process over when they arrive in Alaska. This license will allow for further portability of clinicians that are intending to move to Alaska as an equivalent, lower tiered license will exist that they may apply for.

The Board of Professional Counselors fully believes that the implementation of the Associate Counselor license type will lead to better regulation of clinicians that are not yet working at an independent level, protection of supervisees and the public as the practice of Associate Counselors will be regulated, and a smoother application process for newly graduated applicants and clinicians relocating to Alaska. The Associate Counselor license will bolster the standards of the profession and ensure that prospective Professional Counselors have proper guidance on their pathway to full licensure.

Sincerely,

The Board of Professional Counselors



Dorene Hagen, *Board Chair*