

01-31-2024

Dear Senator Giessel,

I am a Licensed Professional Counselor in Juneau, and have been for the past 12 years. I took on the role of supervising four interns, because students coming out of our own universities, as well as online universities in other states, are unable to find internships. Unlike in the lower 48 states, our interns can't simply move to the next town to find work. Many take extra time and have to work at up to four agencies just to complete their 2,000 hour internship.

Unfortunately, in the past four months I have had four interns, I have only been able to find them a total of six self-pay clients to split between the four of them. This is because there are currently no insurance companies that will pay for services provided by interns in Alaska, simply because LPC interns do not have an Associate Credential to utilize as a mechanism to acknowledge that their skill level has been verified and is supported by our state. As such, no LPC interns can provide billable services. This creates a detriment to our community mental health agencies and private practice agencies, as we must find meaningful work for interns, for which we receive no compensation.

This detriment is even more importantly affecting our citizens. Our mental health system needs additional therapists. The waitlists for mental health services in Juneau are up to one year long. There is more than enough work available, and not nearly enough workers to complete it. Licensed Social Workers and Marriage and Family Therapy interns do not have the same problem. I am asking for parity across professions that require the same amount of training and education, and are recognized in every other state but one, as well as by every insurance company.

I am also asking that you fast track this bill through your system, as every month it is delayed creates a longer waitlist and more inequity in the system. The moment this bill is passed, I can take at least 100 clients off the waitlists for mental health therapy in Alaska. Statewide, not just in Juneau.

If you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at this email, or by phone at 360-214-2125.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
Pyper Thaller, MS, LPC, LMHC, MAC, CDCS

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Pyper Thaller, MS, LPC, LMHC, MAC, CDCS

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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  
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April 28<sup>th</sup>, 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



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Dorene Hagen, *Board Chair*

# LIGHTED PATH THERAPY SERVICES LLC



Brad Holl, LPC

**Physical address:** 3035 E Palmer-Wasilla Hwy #401  
Wasilla, AK 99654  
**Mailing Address:** PO Box 871336  
Wasilla, AK 99687

**Phone:** (907) 312-1202  
**Fax:** (855) 553-8083  
**Email:** brad@lightedpaththerapy.com

To whom it may concern, my name is Brad Holl. I am a professional counselor in Alaska and I currently operate Lighted Path Therapy where we employ 15 licensed clinicians. We operate in an outpatient capacity in Wasilla, Eagle River, and Anchorage. We currently do approximately 800 therapy sessions per month in the state.

I would like to express my support of Senate Bill 116 as requested by Senator Giessel.

Alaska has been behind the national standard of offering a pre-license track or an associate license, and I believe this will be a great step forward to help address the significant mental health needs in the state.

I imagine that one specific area this will benefit is the Alaskans with mental health needs who have insurance but are currently sitting on waitlists or often give up trying to find a therapist due to no openings. My practice currently has to turn away approximately 10 to 20 potential clients every week who reach out to us for help. The reason we turn these people away is because we don't have enough Licensed providers to meet the need. It would be extremely helpful to be able to utilize graduated providers who we could then provide high quality supervision to and oversee their cases. I believe that just in our agency alone we could take on an additional 25% of the clients that reach out to us.

Lighted Path continues to grow and is working hard to meet the needs of Alaskans. Approving this bill would move us towards that goal.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely, Brad Holl, LPC



March 30, 2023

To: Whom it may concern,

I am expressing support for Senate Bill 116 to allow associated licenses for pre-LPCs in Alaska. It provides standards of practice and guidance to those individuals who are not yet Licensed Professional Counselors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lauren Berberich".

Lauren Berberich, MS, LPC

**Web:** [www.flourishtherapy.llc](http://www.flourishtherapy.llc) **Phone:** 907-802-6595 **Fax:** 907-313-1379

**Address:** 11350 E Palmer Wasilla Hwy Palmer, AK 99645

# senate bill 116

From **Kira Lathrop** <K.Lathrop@skagway.org>  
To **Rachel** <Rachel@lightedpaththerapy.com>  
Sent Tuesday, April 4, 2023 at 4:15 PM  
Encrypted No  
Signed No  
Attachments image005.png, image002.png, image004.png

Hi! I am writing in support of a provisional/associate license for license professional counseling. I am a licensed professional counselor and hold designation as a board approved supervisor with the LPC board of Alaska.

Currently master's level graduates who are pursuing their license are not accounted for and it is unknown to the board and the state they are practicing. This means the board and the state cannot provide oversight to a supervisee should an issue arise during their post graduate practice.

Many states have a provisional or associate status license. These are simple declarations of place of employment/practice and who their supervisor is. Due to how simple these are it would not create a significant administrative burden.

It would be my hope counselors who have a provisional status could bill third party insurance with more ease.

For the above reasons please support this bill.

Kira Lathrop, MA, LPC, NCC, C-DBT  
Behavioral Health Clinical Therapist  
Dahl Memorial Clinic  
PO Box 537  
Skagway, Alaska 99840



April 3, 2023

Re: SB 116

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to provide testimony and support for the passing of Senate Bill 116, which provides guidance and policy related to the Licensed Professional Counselors' (LPC) board and in the introduction of an associate counselor's license. The introduction of an associate's license would provide the State of Alaska's behavioral health professionals with a necessary step in their clinical development.

As a behavioral health professional for 11 years, with 7 in Alaska, I have witnessed many clinicians put in their due diligence with continuing education, training hours, and direct clinical services while they work towards LPC status. The field is experiencing staffing issues, and it is common to see supervisors' positions with high turnover rates, leaving growing clinicians without the appropriate professional to sign off on their hours. In other states, associate clinical licenses already exist; the State of Alaska has other credentialing tracks with steps in the process that includes higher education, testing, and experience requirements.

I urge you to consider passing SB 116 to provide this necessary step in clinical licensure to allow more masters' level professionals in the behavioral health field a step towards licensure to expand the employment opportunities, training, and on the job experiences.

Sincerely,



Jamie Elkhill

(757) 759-1086/Jamie.elkhill@gmail.com

April 5, 2023

1901 N Hemmer Rd, Ste 208  
Palmer, AK 99645

The Honorable Cathy Giessel  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Giessel:

I am writing in support of Senate Bill No. 116 in the Legislature of the State of Alaska. As a constituent and Board Approved Supervisor for Professional Counselors, I am in support of associate counselors being licensed under AS08.29, as well as to be included in all pertinent Alaska statutes and regulations that guide licensure and minimum standards for this title.

Thank you for your time,



Carolina Hernandez Powers, LCSW, LPC-S  
Foundations Therapeutic Services, LLC  
Board Approved Supervisor for Professional Counselors, AK  
EMDR/IA Consultant in Training  
Alaska EMDR Network, Treasurer



Lighted Path Therapy Services, LLC  
13036 Old Glenn Highway  
Eagle River, Alaska 99577

April 3, 2023

The Alaska State Legislature  
Senate Labor & Commerce Committee  
State Capitol, Terry Miller Building  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

**Subject: Senate Bill No. 116 (Associate and Professional Counselors)**

Honorable Members of the Committee:

The legislation concerning Senate Bill No. 116 (SB 116) is of paramount interest to me because I am a licensed psychologist in Alaska. SB 116 directly impacts my mental health practice, professional colleagues, and vulnerable members of our communities. I believe its enactment into law will promote higher standards of training for professional counselors, improve access to mental health services throughout our State, and safeguard aspects of public health for Alaskans.

Throughout my career in higher education, I have been privileged to serve on the graduate faculty at training programs for professional counselors (CACREP-accredited) and clinical psychologists (APA-accredited). My opinions are therefore informed by these experiences, and I am convinced that tiered licensure is imperative in Alaska. SB 116 will establish a two-tiered framework for professional counselors, which has precedence in multiple jurisdictions and represents the highest standard of training.

There are at least two reasons I am petitioning your support for this legislation. First, I am convinced a two-tiered framework will significantly enhance the quality of mental health services in Alaska. Licensed professional counselor associates will satisfy the highest training requirements and demonstrate greater competence in our jurisdiction. This proactive stance will provide more accountability for counselors in supervision and protect the interests of Alaskans under their professional care. Second, I am convinced a two-tiered framework will reduce barriers to license portability and benefit professional counselors. It will also support the Board of Professional Counselors to rigorously vet the quality of professional counselors applying for licensure in Alaska.

Our communities deserve the finest mental health care possible, and our professional counselors deserve the highest quality of training possible. I am convinced SB 116 will promote the interests of all constituents and distinguish Alaska as a standard-bearer for mental health care in our Nation. Thank you for considering my opinions on this important legislation, which I sincerely hope the Committee Members enact into law.

Respectfully,



Michael J. Vogel, PsyD, DMin, LP  
Licensed Psychologist, Chief Clinical Officer

To whom it may concern,

This letter is in support of Senate Bill 116. As a recent masters graduate in the clinical mental health field, this bill would significantly benefit the ability of new mental health therapists to transition into the field across all services. An Associate License would streamline the process for licensing, provide support, guidance, and accountability for those individuals. This licensing design has the potential to increase supports to the greater community as it opens more avenues for therapists to engage with clients before qualifying for a full license. The proposal is also in line with national standards in comparison to the licensure processes most states possess.

Thank you,  
Erika Hopper, MA  
Clinical Therapist

March 3, 2023

To: Senator Giessel

From: Kim Hammans, LPC, Alaska License, 183911

Dear Senator Giessel,

I am an LPC in Alaska, currently practicing in Eagle River, AK. I am writing to send my support for Senate Bill 116. I believe this bill brings more structure to our career field.

Having an associate license in our state would allow protection for both the state as well as the practicing counselor by providing structure and regulations for both parties. This ultimately will improve client care across the state, which should always be our goal. The support for therapists in their first years of practice is invaluable and providing an associate's license will ensure the best training possible.

As we look across the nation, it is common to have an associate's license and therefore, Senate Bill 116 would help Alaska to keep up with the national standards for therapeutic services.

Thanks for your time and consideration to this matter.

Kim Hammans, LPC

[kim@lightedpaththerapy.com](mailto:kim@lightedpaththerapy.com)

314-804-3814

Lighted Path Therapy

13036 Old Glenn Hwy

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