



NORTH CAROLINA BOARD of LICENSED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS

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North Carolina Board of Licensed Professional Counselors Position on the Draft Amend APA/Sunset Occupational Licensing Boards Bill

The North Carolina Board of Licensed Professional Counselors is comprised of 7 members, 2 are public members and 5 are licensed professional counselors. Of the 5 that are licensed professional counselors one counselor is employed as a counselor educator, one counselor is practicing in the public sector, one counselor is practicing in the private sector, and two are licensed professional counselors at large. **While the North Carolina Board of Licensed Professional Counselors always remains open to working collaboratively with mental health professionals across disciplines in service to the citizens of North Carolina, the Board is opposed to the sunset language found in the Amend APA/Sunset Occupational Licensing Boards draft bill.**

- The North Carolina Board of Licensed Professional Counselors is especially concerned with the language found in Section 24 of the draft which sunsets the North Carolina Substance Abuse Professional Practice Board and the North Carolina Marriage and Family Board Therapy Board and places their licensure responsibilities under the North Carolina Board of Licensed Professional Counselors. The Board also opposes the proposed consolidated license structure found in Section 26.
- Licensed professional counselors, licensed marriage and family therapists, and substance abuse professionals all provide valuable services to North Carolina's citizens for public health and public safety needs. Each Board has different standards for education, examination, and supervised experience that is aligned with the specialty needs of its focus.
- The 3 licensure boards: North Carolina Board of Licensed Professional Counselors, North Carolina Licensed Marriage and Family Therapy Board, and North Carolina Substance Abuse Professional Practice Board, need to remain separate entities in order to protect the public.
- The proposed changes steer North Carolina away from meeting the mental health and substance use disorder needs of its citizens. The costs to the licensed professional counselors from the proposed changes are high while the benefits for the public are not evident.
- As noted in Governor McCrory's 2015 Executive Order No. 76 establishing *The Governor's Task Force on Mental Health and Substance Use*, mental illness and substance use disorders are among the biggest health care challenges that our state will face over the next decade. Therefore, a statewide workforce of licensed mental health professionals using evidence based practices for assessment, diagnosis, and treatment is a critical state need. It is an especially critical need within our rural and military-affiliated communities.
- The impact of untreated mental health and substance use disorders is burdensome to North Carolina taxpayers. Licensed professional counselors, of which there are 7,600 in North Carolina, are affordable providers within the spectrum of mental health professionals whose availability increases access to appropriate treatment at many stages of intervention, from prevention and early identification, to recovery services or crisis care.

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