



February 24, 2022

Senator Kathy Harrington
300 N. Salisbury St., Room 300-B
Raleigh, NC 27603

Dear Senator Harrington:

My name is Stacey Watkins-Griffith, and I am the Vice Chair of the State Board of Examiners of Fee-Based Practicing Pastoral Counselors. I am writing in response to the request for a presentation at the meeting of the Joint Legislative Administrative Procedure Oversight Committee meeting on March 8, 2022. The purpose of this letter is to provide a brief personal introduction, and to respond to the four questions raised by the committee.

A brief personal introduction:

I am an ordained United Methodist Clergy person and I have been in ministry as a NC Certified Fee-Based Practicing Pastoral Counselor since 2011. I do my clinical work in Shelby, NC, and I work with individuals, couples, and families. My areas of expertise include spiritually integrated psychotherapy, women's issues, and navigating life transitions (including grief and loss). I attended the meeting with the Joint Legislative Administrative Procedure Oversight Committee in 2016, and was appointed by Speaker of the House Tim Moore to serve on the Board in 2017. I was honored to be reappointed by Speaker Moore to serve a second term in 2020.

In response to the questions:

(1) As a Board, we heard the concerns raised by the APO committee in 2016, and we have worked diligently to strengthen our board in order to meet the current reporting requirements and standards of best practice as mental health service providers. It has been our hope to expand the number of pastoral counselors in North Carolina because we do provide a unique and significant mental health practice to the people of North Carolina. In a crisis, many people in our state first turn to their pastor or faith community for support.

Stacey Watkins-Griffith,
M. DIV, D. MIN



p: (704) 810-4344
f: (704) 810-4345



200 East Marion Street
Shelby, NC 28150



PO Box 28
Forest City, NC 28043



stacey@SpiritSongCounseling.com
www.SpiritSongCounseling.com



Pastors and faith communities refer to pastoral counselors. We would like to remain an independent board, but we are also aware that our numbers are small, and our resources are limited. While the work our Board has done over the past 5 years has created a strong and stable Board for the short term, at this point, I am concerned that these changes are not sufficient to remain a viable Board for the long term. I would support consolidation with another mental health licensing board in North Carolina. It is necessary for pastoral counselors to continue to be accountable to an occupational licensing board in order to maintain highest standards as mental health practitioners as well as to continue to be eligible to receive payment, including insurance reimbursement, for mental health services.

(2) As mental health services providers, it would be most appropriate for our Board to be consolidated with either the NC Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor Board or the NC Licensed Marriage and Family Therapy Board.

(3) At present, the requirements for the different mental health professionals regulated by the existing occupational licensing boards in North Carolina are very different. In order to consolidate more efficiently, there would need to be statutory changes in order to maintain the credentials of current pastoral counselors and to provide a smooth transition for those who are already in process toward certification.

(4) If the Board were to be consolidated, it would be beneficial to have the Executive Director and existing Board members work with the other licensing board to facilitate the process of consolidation.

I will be present at the meeting on Tuesday, March 8, and look forward to the opportunity to meet you in person.

Sincerely,

Dr. Stacey Watkins-Griffith

Stacey Watkins-Griffith,

M. DIV, D. MIN

