

Senator White,

I feel like I haven't seen you in years - And its true! Hope you are well. No doubt you are very busy.

With the assumption that time is tight for testimony I am offering the following input on H.661 on behalf of Vermont Care Partners. (If you like we can provide 'in-person' testimony)

We've discussed the bill internally and with OPR and are generally very supportive of the bill, especially these points:

- continuing education credit requirements on anti-oppressive practice implemented based on recommendations from the Health Equity Advisory Commission
- transferability between mental health license types for continuing education
- synchronous virtual continuing education credits

We also support the idea of the Mental Health Professional Licensure Study and have had positive experiences working as a stakeholder with OPR in their Interstate Telehealth Group. We would like to respectfully request that Vermont Care Partners or designee is included on the list of stakeholders. Our network represents the public mental health system in Vermont, with hundreds of mental health clinicians practicing in our system representing all license types and hundreds more who could potentially be interested or eligible to become clinicians but may experience barriers to entering mental health professions. We also have a strong and unique clinical supervisory structure, and we have concerns about the growing practice of pre-licensure independent supervised practice. As such, we are very invested in all three aspects of the study.

Finally, we are aware that OPR Director Lauren Hibbert advocated for the reinsertion of a position at OPR to focus support on mental health licensees. As Hibbert noted, the sheer volume of inquiry can get in the way of OPR providing high quality and timely responses to our members. We have requested that OPR devote resources to a mental health content expert in the past, and don't want to miss the opportunity to reinforce Hibbert's testimony towards this need.

***Thanks,
Julie***

Julie Tessler (she/her)
Executive Director
Vermont Council of Developmental and Mental Health Services