

In- Support LD 1084

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and honorable members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services,

I'm Holly Hall, Chief HR Officer at Sweetser and I am here to speak in support of Rep. Crafts bill, LD 1084 a Resolve, to Alleviate the Behavioral Health Workforce Shortage by Allowing the Training and Granting of Behavioral Health Certifications by Community-based Agencies and Hospitals.

Workforce remains our biggest challenge.

It has become increasingly difficult to find and retain competent, experienced, and compassionate staff. As an organization, we are deeply committed to the professional development of our employees. We offer numerous opportunities for growth through education and hands-on experience, aiming to build careers in the behavioral health field. We understand that retaining staff is crucial to providing consistent and quality care, and we are committed to supporting their development to help ensure they stay with us.

The goal of this bill is to help streamline many of the administrative processes and regulatory requirements that currently slow down our ability to support staff development. Like many other agencies, we have the infrastructure in place to monitor and track the educational paths of our employees, ensuring that they remain compliant with licensing agencies and industry regulations. What we need now is the ability to access the training modules required and be certified to provide educational opportunities directly to our staff, and potentially others in the field.

We understand and respect the importance of compliance, regulations, and the need to monitor our staff's progress. However, we should have the ability to manage our own staff's training and timelines. Currently, we have over 300 employees with certifications such as MHRT-1, MHRT-C, and BHP. While we collect most of the documentation required for certification, we still depend on other organizations to review and verify these documents before issuing certifications. As an organization, we are fully capable of managing the certification process internally, determining the requirements, and ensuring that staff meet those requirements in a timely manner. Streamlining this process with other agencies will help us better manage staff schedules, offer required curriculum more frequently, and include real-life examples of what it's like to be a behavioral health worker. In addition to improving access to training, I also believe it's crucial to assess the training itself.

Is the content still relevant given the level of acuity we are seeing in clients today? Is the training trauma-informed and evidence-based? Do the regulations and expiration dates still make sense in today's environment? Can we more carefully review relevant experience from out of state so that staff with years of experience don't have to go through redundant training just to continue their work? Moreover, can we consider adjusting the timeframe for completing the MHRT-C training? Currently, it is unrealistic for new hires to complete the required courses within 90 days, especially if courses are not available during that time.

Retaining our workforce is critical to the continued success of our mission. We need to make changes to streamline and better manage the vast amount of training our staff must complete to remain certified.

In terms of the specific language of this bill, we would support getting stakeholders together on this topic. Through a stakeholder engagement process, there could be solutions developed for this committee's consideration.

Thank you for your time and consideration today.

Sincerely,
Holly Hall
Chief HR Officer