

## Remarks for Senate Bill 1286

Senate Health & Welfare Committee

2/24/22

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee. Good afternoon. My name is Lance Giles, and I am a contract lobbyist based in Boise, Idaho.

Today, I am here on behalf of my client, the Idaho Psychological Association, and I am urging you to send Senate Bill 1286 to the full Senate with a due-pass recommendation.

As you know, Idaho has a severe behavioral health care provider shortage. Wait times for new patients are still way too long. In some cases, those wait times can be as much as nine to ten months. If this bill, which is intended to preserve Idaho's current number of psychological service extenders does not pass, we fear those wait times will become much longer and the behavior healthcare provider shortage will worsen.

In addition, the pipeline for the next generation of Idaho psychologists will decrease significantly because many paid service extender positions, which are used for

clinical graduate work and post-graduate residencies in Idaho will disappear.

For nearly thirty years, Idaho has been regulating psychological service extenders and for the most part it has worked very well. Service extenders are often graduate students in training, or individuals who have finished their doctorate degree and are completing their supervised clinical hours to become eligible for licensure as a psychologist. They provide important psychological services under the supervision of licensed psychologists. Simply put, service extenders, allow psychologists to treat more patients. Without them, fewer Idaho patients will be served.

So how did we get here and what is the plan to fix it? Late last fall, the Idaho Division of Occupational and Professional Licenses determined that the statutory language that the Board of Psychological Examiners has been using to regulate and permit service extenders was insufficient. This bill is meant to correct that.

If you turn to page 2, line 33....(Walk the Senators through the bill).

It is critical that this bill go into effect so that Idaho can continue to protect the health and safety of the public and so that service extenders can continue to get reimbursed for their services under insurance.

If Idaho does not continue to regulate service extenders, the state will lose its ability to track or discipline bad actors and make that information available to the public. This is particularly important because some service extenders treat vulnerable patients in private office settings and have access to highly confidential patient and testing information.

Furthermore, if the bill is not passed, it will be extremely difficult to reimburse service extenders under insurance. Insurance providers rely upon the service extender permits issued by the state to make sure the service extenders are legit. Without the ability to get paid via insurance, psychologists will have to lay-off many service extenders, including graduate students and those post-doctoral students that are earning the necessary clinical hours to become licensed psychologists in Idaho.

In drafting this bill, we consulted with the Idaho Division of Occupational and Professional Licenses and

incorporated their recommendations into the bill. The Division has no objections to the legislation.

Again, I urge you to send Senate Bill 1286 to the full Senate with a due-pass recommendation, and I stand for questions.