

**PROPONENT TESTIMONY ON HB 2734
HOUSE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
MARCH 14, 2022**

Madam Chair and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today as a proponent of HB 2734. I am David Fye, the Executive Director of the Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board (BSRB). HB 2734 was requested on behalf of the BSRB and the bill includes two Board-recommended statutory changes for the professions regulated by the BSRB.

The BSRB is the licensing body for most of the state's mental health professionals, including Licensed Psychology, Master's Level Psychology, Social Work, Professional Counseling, Marriage and Family Therapy, Addiction Counseling, and Behavioral Analysis. Currently, there are more than 14,300 active permanent licenses in the professions we regulate. Our mission is to protect the public's health, safety, and welfare from unlawful or unprofessional practitioners who fall under the Board's jurisdiction. We have defined statutory credentialing qualifications, as well as minimal educational and experiential requirements that applicants must satisfy before being granted licensure.

Section 1 (pages 1 - 4) of HB 2734 includes language to address the unintended consequences of an amendment which was added to enacted 2021 Senate Sub. for HB 2208. During the 2021 Legislative session, the BSRB requested introduction of HB 2208, which included several changes for the professions under the BSRB. When that bill was heard in committees, an amendment was added to the bill, deleting a requirement of 350 hours of direct client hours within a clinical practicum, as part of the requirements to become a Licensed Specialist Clinical Social Worker. However, the amendment struck the entire phrase "*with not less than 350 hours of direct client contact **or additional postgraduate supervised experience as determined by the Board.***" Prior to the amendment, the BSRB could evaluate applicants who had undergone a different type of practicum, such as an administrative practicum, so long as other requirements were met. Legal counsel for the Board has determined that with the additional language struck from statute, the Board is no longer able to evaluate candidates who have undergone such practicums, so the effect of the amendment went beyond striking the requirement of 350 hours of direct client contact. We do not believe the intent of the amendment was to be limiting for applicants in this way, therefore HB 2734 adds back the phrase "*or additional postgraduate supervised experience as determined by the Board.*" If HB 2734 is enacted, the Board may pursue clarifying language in regulation to enable additional applicants to become Licensed Specialist Clinical Social Workers.

Section 2 (pages 4 – 7) includes language enabling additional individuals a path to become Licensed Addiction Counselors under the BSRB. Current law allows most master's-level practitioners under the BSRB to use their licenses as an alternative to the

traditional educational requirements to take the examination to become a Licensed Master's Level Addiction Counselor. Current law also allows most clinical-level practitioners under the BSRB to use their licenses as an alternative to the traditional educational requirements to take the examination to become a Licensed Clinical Addiction Counselor. Certain master's-level and clinical-level practitioners under the BSRB have requested the flexibility to use their licenses to satisfy requirements to take the lower-level test to become a Licensed Addiction Counselor, however the BSRB lacks the ability to provide that flexibility without statutory changes. HB 2734 would allow these current master's-level or clinical-level practitioners under the BSRB to be able to use those licenses to fulfill the education requirement for approval to test for a Licensed Addiction Counselor license, increasing the number of Addiction Counselors and enabling additional services to be provided to the citizens of Kansas. The Board believes this statutory change will allow additional applicants to become licensed as Addiction Counselors more quickly, without sacrificing protection of the public.

In summary, Madam Chair and members of the Committee, we believe passage of HB 2734 will allow additional qualified mental health professionals to obtain licensure in Kansas without sacrificing public protection and we request your support in passing this important bill.