

The Honorable <full name>  
Ohio House of Representatives  
77 South High Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Representative <last name>,

I am writing to ask for your support for Senate Bill-53 (sponsored by Senator's Clancy, Padgett, and Miller) which would amend section 5122.10 of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) to permit a licensed professional clinical counselor (LPCC) to initiate action to take certain persons who present grave risk of harming others into custody and have them transported to a hospital for observation and evaluation for admission.

An LPCC is licensed to independently diagnose and treat mental and emotional disorders. Under Ohio law, an LPCC is charged with the duty to protect third parties whenever a client represents a substantial risk of causing physical harm to or causing the death of one or more clearly identifiable potential victims. An LPCC's duty to protect is triggered whenever "a client or patient or a knowledgeable person has communicated to the professional or organization an explicit threat of inflicting imminent and serious physical harm to or causing the death of one or more clearly identifiable potential victims, the professional or organization has reason to believe that the client or patient has the intent and ability to carry out the threat" [ORC §2305.51].

Currently, Ohio LPCCs are not empowered to sign our state's application for emergency admission, (sometimes referred to as the "state mental hold"), a power granted to physicians, clinical psychologists, certain other mental health professionals, and law enforcement personnel [ORC §5122.10], which may be used to detain and transport the person to a hospital where the person can be held for observation until hospital personnel determine whether to admit the individual as a patient of the hospital for further observation and treatment.

Without statutory authority to detain and transport the client to a hospital for observation, critical time is lost, especially for LPCCs in private practice, while the LPCC arranges for the client to be re-evaluated by another mental health professional who has the authority. Further, the risk to public safety is increased, since until the order to detain and transport the person to a hospital is signed, the client may not be detained against their will even if the client's symptoms escalate.

LPCCs are thoroughly trained, rigorously tested, mental health professionals who, like psychiatrists and psychologists, are licensed to independently diagnose and treat mental and emotional disorders. LPCCs are prepared by their training and required by their ethical codes of conduct to carefully weigh the balance between preserving the client's individual freedom of choice and protecting the public from harm.

This bill is supported in Ohio by the Ohio Counseling Association, the Ohio Mental Health Counselors Association, the Ohio Counselor, Social Worker, and Marriage and Family Therapy Board, and the Ohio Council of Behavioral Healthcare Providers.

Nationally, it is supported by the American Counseling Association, the American Mental Health Counselors Association, and the National Board of Certified Counselors.

I urge you to vote for SB-53.

<your name>

<your street address>

<your city, state, and zipcode>