

Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

SB 290 Testimony - Proponent

January 24, 2012

Chair Vicki Schmidt and Members of the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee:

My name is Deborah Stidham. I am a Licensed Clinical Addiction Counselor and a member of the BSRB Addiction Counselor Advisory Committee. I also participated on the Compromise Committee which has put forth the revisions contained in SB 290. I am speaking to you as a proponent of these changes.

One of the most significant provisions in this bill allows BSRB clinically licensed professionals to take (and pass) a nationally recognized test in addictions in lieu of addiction specific coursework. In addition, the applicant would be required to submit an attestation from another clinically licensed professional that he or she is competent to diagnose and treat substance use disorders. This amendment is important as it allows licensed and clinicians experienced in addictions, who want to be licensed as an addiction counselor, to do so without having to take additional coursework.

Another amendment contained within this bill creates the option for LBSW's, who also want to be licensed as an addiction counselor, to take fewer hours in addiction coursework than someone who has completed their degree in a "related field". This compromise was reached after a great deal of negotiating and will require additional discussion during the rules and regulation process to determine what that minimum number of hours in addiction specific coursework will be.

Some of the changes you see before you are technical and are designed to ensure that the statute is clearly written and in alignment with other statutes that govern the behavioral sciences.

The crux of my testimony is this – SB 290 represents hours of discussion among the various interest groups. The risk here today lies not in the language of this bill but in the opportunity this may give others – who may or may not have been part of this committee- to propose changes of their own.

The passing of the Addiction Counselor Act in 2010 was important legislation that was taken on behalf of Kansas consumers. I urge the committee to take into consideration the long arduous process the Addiction Counselor Act has already been through these past two years and resist any attempt that may be made to amend it beyond the scope of SB 290.