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House Executive Departments and Administration  
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Chair Layon, Vice Chair Slottje, and all distinguished members of the House Executive Departments and Administration:

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony on the regulation of dieticians in the state of Florida. I am an Assistant Professor of General Business at West Virginia University and the Director of Labor Policy at the Knee Regulatory Research Center. I am also a Regulatory Policy Fellow with the Archbridge Institute. My comments are not submitted on behalf of any party or interest group.

My research focuses on the effects of occupational licensing laws on quality, prices, and wages. We use occupational licensing to protect consumers by ensuring that professionals are qualified. However, these well-intended regulations can make it difficult for aspiring professionals to enter professions, especially in healthcare.<sup>1</sup>

Mental health and substance abuse disorders nearly 50 million Americans struggle with substance use disorders and over 100,000 Americans died of drug-related causes in 2024.<sup>2</sup> Employment for licensed alcohol and drug counselors is projected to grow to meet that demand, but rigid licensing laws can prevent new professionals from entering the field.

We see the same pattern for speech language pathology and other therapy services: growing demand, expectations of a growth in professionals, and rigid licensing laws making entry difficult and time consuming for new entrants.

Licensing requirements often contain fixed education pathways. As the demand for healthcare services grows, people looking to change careers face significant hurdles, adding time and cost that discourages many, exacerbating shortages of professionals.

HB 1572 offers a simple solution: adding additional pathways or accepting equivalent degrees. It increases flexibility for alcohol and drug counselors, speech-language assistants, and recreational therapists, allowing more people to meet the growing demand for these professions. The bill maintains professional standards, so the additional professionals will not put patients at risk.

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<sup>1</sup> Blair, Peter Q., and Bobby W. Chung. "How much of barrier to entry is occupational licensing?." *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 57, no. 4 (2019): 919-943.

<sup>2</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. "National Survey on Drug Use and Health." (2024).; The Drug Enforcement Administration. "National Drug Threat Assessment." (2024).