

SENATOR WYLAND'S BILL TO LICENSE PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS SIGNED INTO LAW BY GOVERNOR

Senate Bill 788 will Increase Californians' Access to Mental Health Services

SACRAMENTO, October 13, 2009 — Senator Mark Wyland (R-Carlsbad) this week announced receiving Governor Schwarzenegger's signature on his legislation to license Professional Clinical Counselors in California. The new law will address a documented shortage of mental health professionals.

Under current law, there are two master's level mental health practitioners: Marriage and Family Therapists and Licensed Clinical Social Workers. [Senate Bill 788](#) adds a third: the Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor. Professional Counselors are licensed in every other state in the nation, but are not able to practice here in California. By filling a recognized shortage of mental health professionals, this bill will help Californians increase access to mental health services—without resulting in any new increased costs to taxpayers. In his signing message, Governor Schwarzenegger emphasized his future desire to work with Wyland on implementing reforms to the complaint, investigation and enforcement process for the state's valuable consumer protection boards.

"I applaud Governor Schwarzenegger's decision to sign this groundbreaking piece of legislation into law and look forward to continue working with him next year to improve the investigation and enforcement actions of these boards so that consumers can be assured of the quality of their licensed health care professionals," stated Wyland. "By implementing this first important reform to license Professional Clinical Counselors, we've already taken a huge step forward in increasing access to mental health care for Californians."

Dean Porter, President of the California Coalition for Counselor Licensure (CCCL), sponsor of SB 788, explains that, "Licensing Professional Clinical Counselors means that California will have a new pool of qualified mental health professionals to address its critical shortage of mental health workers. Professional Counselors are masters and doctoral-level counselors, who practice psychotherapy, with qualifications on par with Marriage and Family Therapists and Licensed Social Workers. CCCL is very appreciative of Senator Wyland's leadership on this important bill."

Senator Mark Wyland represents the people of the 38th Senate District, which includes cities in north San Diego County and the south Orange County cities of San Clemente and San Juan Capistrano.