

TENNESSEE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FISCAL REVIEW COMMITTEE



FISCAL MEMORANDUM

SB 1556 – HB 1840

March 16, 2016

SUMMARY OF ORIGINAL BILL: Exempts a counselor or therapist providing counseling or therapy services, whether or not licensed, registered, or otherwise regulated by the state, from counseling or serving a client as to goals, outcomes, or behaviors that conflict with a sincerely held religious belief of the counselor or therapist, if the counselor or therapist coordinates a referral of the client to another counselor or therapist who will provide the counseling or therapy. Refusal to provide counseling or therapy services is not a basis for a civil cause of action, criminal prosecution, or any other action by this state or a political subdivision of the state to penalize or withhold benefits or privileges, including tax exemptions or governmental contracts, grants, or licenses.

Defines “counseling or therapy services” as assisting an individual, through the counseling relationship, in a manner intended to facilitate normal human growth and development, using a combination of mental health and human development principles, methods, and techniques, to achieve mental, emotional, physical, social, moral, educational, spiritual, or career development and adjustment throughout the life span.

FISCAL IMPACT OF ORIGINAL BILL:

NOT SIGNIFICANT

SUMMARY OF AMENDMENT (013238): Adds language to the original bill establishing that if a counselor or therapist refuses to provide counseling or therapy services, whether or not licensed, registered, or otherwise regulated by the state, for counseling or serving a client as to goals, outcomes, or behaviors that conflict with a sincerely held religious belief of the counselor or therapist, then the counselor or therapist shall not charge the client or patient any fee or file any action to recover any unpaid fee.

FISCAL IMPACT OF BILL WITH PROPOSED AMENDMENT:

Unchanged from the original fiscal note.

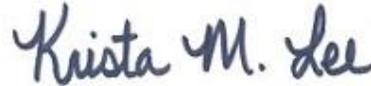
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Assumptions for the bill as amended:

- According to the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (DMHSAS), the proposed legislation could potentially allow any Regional Mental Health Institute employee or any employee of agencies contracted to provide substance abuse addiction recovery services or substance abuse prevention services the right to refuse to provide counseling or therapy services.
- In such instances, it is the counselor's or therapist's responsibility to coordinate a referral to another counselor or therapist.
- Any fiscal impact to DMHSAS to ensure compliance with the proposed legislation would be not significant.
- Based on information provided by the Department of Health, the proposed legislation will not affect any operations or programs of the Department.

CERTIFICATION:

The information contained herein is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.



Krista M. Lee, Executive Director

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