

March 29th, 2021

Senator Mary Daugherty Abrams, Chair
Representative Jonathan Steinberg, Chair
Senator Heather Somers, Ranking Member
Senator Tony Hwang, Ranking Member
Representative William Petit, Ranking Member
Public Health Committee

Connecticut General Assembly
Legislative Office Building
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Chairwoman Abrams, Chairman Steinberg, Ranking Members Somers, Hwang, and Petit and Members of the Public Health Committees:

My name is Dr. Ralph Cohen and I am currently the Program Director for the Masters program in Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU). I am writing in support of HB6666, An Act Concerning the Department of Public Health's Recommendations Regarding Various Revisions to the Public Health Statutes.

Our program is nationally accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE). CCSU is one of four COAMFTE-accredited Marriage and Family Therapy programs in the state of Connecticut. These programs proudly are nationally recognized for their ability to provide top tier training. In order to meet or exceed this national recognition, these schools also continue to complete the COAMFTE re-accreditation process that ensures they continually grow and adapt with the profession and the needs of the times.

When the COVID-19 pandemic started, these MFT programs faced novel challenges, as well as the need to make educational and professional adaptations. COAMFTE provided guidance and modifications in the requirements to address such challenges in students' obtaining training and education during a pandemic. In doing so, COAMFTE collaborated with the accredited programs to ensure that the students continue to receive the highest quality of education and to provide high quality of mental health care to clients during their supervised internships, on top of adapting to the required advances in technology needed to provide such services remotely during the lock-down. As the barriers of the pandemic eventually pass, COAMFTE will continue to assess program standards necessary to ensure that our accredited programs maintain the highest quality of patient care and student education.

HB6666 allows for our programs to maintain alignment between our accreditation standards and LMFT licensing requirements. COAMFTE is charged to re-assess and appropriately modify educational and training standards to keep these accredited programs in line with the most current best practices in training MFTs without having to revisit legislative language for each essential change that may arise. Students can thus feel confident that by choosing a COAMFTE

program they are receiving the best MFT education and can move smoothly through their education and the licensure process. This efficiency would allow additional mental health providers to be available to the record number of Connecticut residents in need of mental health services.

I urge you to support HB6666 with the modification that the effective date of this legislation be modified from October 2021 to “effective upon passage”. This modification allows all students graduating throughout this school year the ability to move through the licensure process without further disruption and will thus continue to increase the number of providers available to our Connecticut residents.

Thank you for your time on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Ralph S. Cohen, Ph.D.
MFT Program Director
Central Connecticut State University