

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

I am submitting this testimony in reference to HB No. 6666.

As Program Director of Southern Connecticut State University's Marriage and Family Therapy Program, I strongly support the revisions in HB 6666 that transition Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) licensure requirements in the State of CT. These changes shift MFT licensure requirements away from a client contact requirement (currently written into the statutes and regulations), to, with passage, graduation from a Commission on Accreditation of Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE) program.

When the COVID-19 pandemic started, MFT training programs faced significant challenges. As a result of these challenges, COAMFTE developed procedures to address student and client needs regarding training and education during a pandemic. In doing so, COAMFTE collaborated with the accredited programs to ensure that MFT students received quality education that translates to their patients receiving quality mental health care. Unfortunately, due to the way MFT licensure is currently written in the statutes and regulations in the State of CT, these accreditation body adaptations could not be applied to students training in Connecticut. HB No, 6666 addresses this matter.

The change in HB No. 6666 regarding MFT licensure, allows for COAMFTE to re-assess and appropriately modify standards to keep accredited programs aligned with best practices for professional training, without having to revisit legislative language for changes related to client contact requirements. This translates to the MFT accreditation agency (COAMFTE) having the ability to adopt to and support the needs of effective MFT training.

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 disruption. It will also ensure a supply of effective mental health clinicians to residents of the state of Connecticut during an extreme time of need, and years to come.

Most Sincerely,  
Paul Levatino, LMFT  
SCSU MFT Program Director