

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

My name is Patricia Ritchie and my daughter is currently a Marriage and Family Therapy graduate student at University of Saint Joseph's. 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.

The University of Saint Joseph is one of four COAMFTE accredited Marriage and Family Therapy programs in the state of Connecticut. These programs 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.

When the COVID-19 pandemic started, these MFT programs faced novel challenges, as well as educational and professional adaptations. COAMFTE has developed procedures to address this sudden uniqueness in students obtaining training and education during a pandemic. In doing so, COAMFTE collaborated with the accredited programs to ensure that the students received the highest quality of education as well as their patients received a continued high quality of mental health care, on top of adapting to the required advances of technology. As the barriers of the pandemic eventually passes; COAMFTE will again continue to assess program standards necessary to keep this elite accreditation status, maintaining the highest quality of patient care and student education.

HB6666 allows for COAMFTE to re-assess and appropriately modify necessary standards to keep these accredited programs on top of their professional training 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,

Patricia Petrolito-Ritchie, Realtor