



# Southern Connecticut State University

Testimony in regard to  
H.B. NO. 6439  
AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM  
ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS  
THEREFOR.

Appropriations Committee  
Public Hearing – March 4, 2021

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France, and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Dr. Louisa L. Foss-Kelly and I am Professor at Southern Connecticut State University, where I teach Clinical Mental Health Counseling in the Department of Counseling and School Psychology. I appreciate this opportunity to submit testimony in regard to H.B. No. 6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

As a Licensed Professional Counselor in private practice and Professor in Clinical Mental Health Counseling for over 15 years, I have strong and well-informed opinions about how we can best prepare SCSU students to provide effective and evidence-based services for the most vulnerable people in our communities: Those with mental illness and those at risk for developing mental illness.

**We need excellence in university training if we *truly* want to address the current crises of substance use overdose, suicide and skyrocketing rates of anxiety and depression.** Our citizens deserve no less than our very best efforts, which necessarily include time for faculty to develop curriculum and provide excellence in teaching.

Of vital importance is program accreditation. the SCSU graduate programs in Clinical Mental Health and School Counseling are accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling Related Educational Programs (CACREP).

**CACREP-accreditation aligned curriculum is required for professional counselors to become licensed in Connecticut.** <https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Practitioner-Licensing--Investigations/Professional-Counselor/Connecticut-General-Statutes> **How can my students become licensed if we lose our accreditation?**

Threats to student to faculty ratios, adequate time for student advisement, and a reasonable teaching load will most certainly impact our accreditation status. As a former CACREP accreditation site visitor, I am well aware that such cuts in such resources will indeed

threaten our accreditation status, as well as the accreditation of other counseling programs at CSCU institutions... at a time when our Clinical Mental Health Counseling program is bursting at the seams. **Indeed, each year our program is unable to take all of the students we wish – turning away approximately 30 potential students due to limited faculty resources.**

As our program's Clinical Fieldwork Coordinator, I can speak first hand to the importance of having enough time to thoughtfully place students in community counseling agencies that are suitable for their training and for the clients they serve in such training opportunities. I work hard as a professor, with late nights and numerous sacrifices of time with my family. I cannot fathom having even less time to do my job well, especially when I see colleagues in other states with far lighter teaching loads and far greater resources for critical non-teaching functions.

**We need far more mental health professionals in the state to face the current and future challenges.** In my private practice for example, I am forced to turn away many clients because I simply don't have the time to see them. This is common among all counseling providers! **The need for mental health counselors is urgent and future counselors need to graduate from accredited programs with specific training standards.**

We are 100% committed to make all of this work now with insufficient resources. I truly cannot imagine doing more with less for our students and their future clients in need in desperate need of mental healthcare. **I urge the Committee to preserve funding for higher education.**

Sincerely,



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