

821

Testimony Regarding S.B. 821 "An Act Concerning Marital and Family Therapists"  
Kathleen C. Laundy, PsyD, LMFT, LCSW

I am a Connecticut licensed psychologist, family therapist and social worker with 38 years of clinical experience in private practice and schools. I want to express my opposition to S.B. 821, "An Act Concerning Marital and Family Therapists", proposing that this group be eliminated from insurance reimbursement in order to lower costs.

Surely you appreciate that many providers of mental health care no longer accept insurance for providing mental health service. Under our current managed health care system, a *decreasing* amount of doctoral level psychologists and psychiatrists accept patients using insurance, because the reimbursement rates are so low. Only wealthier families can afford out-of-pocket care from doctoral mental health providers who have chosen to stay in practice through self-pay service. Too many children and families, especially low income people, are being eliminated from receiving insured services in Connecticut, creating bifurcated health care based on income.

The four remaining licensed masters' mental health professionals (marital and family therapists (MFTs), professional counselors, advanced practice registered nurses, and social workers) now provide the bulk of mental health services. We need all four licensed groups, in order to provide quality care to Connecticut citizens.

I am seeing far too many children in my school consultation work who end up needing costly emergency care because they have not received necessary primary preventive care. Further, Connecticut has just passed legislation to hire cost-effective MFTs to practice full time in schools. Why would our legislature support cost saving measures like this in one year, and the next year remove MFTs in mental health agencies, private practice and clinics from insurance coverage? Each licensed discipline brings special skill sets to health care. Why eliminate the professional group most skilled in seeing whole families and couples, a cost-effective support to individual treatment?

Maine and North Carolina legislatures recently determined that requiring health care plans to reimburse MFTs for mental health services has a negligible impact on insurance premiums. Last year our federal government enacted a mental health parity bill which reinforced similar legislation enacted in Connecticut a few years ago. In my view, it is shortsighted and discriminatory to single out MFTs or any other qualified mental health group to be eliminated from providing necessary mental health services. Please vote *against* S.B. 821. Thank you for hearing my testimony.

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