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## **HB 6676 An Act Concerning Licensure for Clinical Social Workers**

### **Esteemed Members of the Public Health Committee**

At the request of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, of which I am a member, I hereby wish to testify to my experience in seeking employment as a social worker in the State of Connecticut which, given the current lack of a multi-tiered licensing system, has been most difficult.

In July 2008, I received an MSW degree from the Wurzweiler School of Social Work of Yeshiva University, in New York, New York. This constituted a mid-life career change for me. In accordance with my desire to help people, the thrust of my academic studies and practical field training was clinical. Since July 2008, I have been seeking work in Connecticut and elsewhere as a clinical social worker – that is, conducting individual and group psychotherapy with children, adolescents or adults, in a public or private agency setting, under the supervision of a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), as prescribed by Connecticut State law.

However, as an MSW with no previous paid social work experience, it has to date been impossible for me to find entry-level work in Connecticut commensurate with my education and training – even though the State does not lack for first-rate mental health facilities. Most such facilities hire people who hold a clinical license only; yet to earn the clinical license, one must provide some 3,000 hours of direct individual and group clinical care, under the supervision of an LCSW, within a licensed agency. I and people like me thus confront a frustrating “Catch-22”: To become employed in my field of choice and training, I must have a clinical license, but to get the clinical license, I must first be employed in the field... This unfortunate situation could be redressed by the institution of a multi-tiered licensing system for social workers wishing to specialize in clinical care.

The State of New York, which offers two levels of licensure, presents a comparison case. Upon earning the MSW degree from Yeshiva University in New York State, I became eligible for, and passed, a State licensing examination, which conferred upon me the designation of Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW). As an LMSW, I am eligible to apply for a range of clinical positions, any of which would enable me to use my graduate education and training while honing my skills and working toward clinical licensure. By making a distinction between more and less experienced clinicians, New York’s two-tiered system gives qualified persons such as myself a chance to embark on a career in mental health and to advance themselves while serving the people of the State. Moreover, by allowing for a differential pay grade matched to level of licensure as well as to years of experience, the multi-tiered system saves money for the State of New York.

A native of Waterbury, Connecticut and legal resident of Guilford, Connecticut, I would very much like to live and work in my new field, in Connecticut – an area I love, and in which I

feel at home. Given that times are hard, the State budget constrained, and the employment market stressed, I will go wherever I find employment. Yet why should the State of Connecticut lose eager and apt practitioners to a neighboring State, merely because of its licensing system? Why should it forfeit the opportunity to garner both new professionals and a savings in funds, merely because it lacks a multi-tiered licensing system? Were there a two-tiered licensing system in Connecticut as there is in New York – and, moreover, were licensing in Connecticut reciprocal with that in New York – I would not have to even think of moving out of state to make a living.

I thank you sincerely for your attention to my testimony.

Marsha Weinstein, MSW, Guilford, Connecticut