

Allison E. Price
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RE: House Bill 6861

Dear Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and members of the Public Health Committee,

My name is Allison Price and I am an advanced level graduate student enrolled in the Marriage and Family Therapy Master's Program at Fairfield University. I started the program in January 2013, began clinical work in September 2014, and am on track to graduate in December 2015. As of this point, I only have one more academic class to complete and have always maintained above a 3.6 GPA. I live in Stratford, Connecticut and currently earn clinical hours by holding an internship at Stamford Counseling Center in Stamford, Connecticut under the supervision of Karen Mazarin-Stanek, MA, LMFT (Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist).

I am writing to you today to bring to your attention an issue that is very important not only to me, but to all Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) in Connecticut. I am asking for you to support the legislation that would create an "Associate", or LMFTA, for MFTs in Connecticut.

As it stands now, in order to become an LMFT in the state of Connecticut, an individual must first graduate with Master's Degree in Marriage and Family Therapy from an accredited program (such as the one at Fairfield University). This alone requires 57 credits, 500 direct client contact hours, and 100 hours of supervision from a LMFT. This process on average takes 2-3 years, although could take closer to 4-5 years while holding a full time job.

After earning a Master's Degree in Marriage and Family Therapy, the National Licensure exam must be passed, 1000 hours of direct client contact must be collected, as well an additional 100 hours of supervision from a LMFT. This process typically 2 years to accomplish, but it is not unusual for it to take longer.

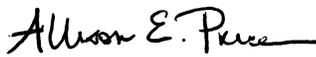
As you can see, becoming a LMFT is a serious commitment; no one chooses to pursue this career who does not want to be doing it with all of their being. Unfortunately, as the way things are now, students with Master's Degrees are stuck between a rock and a hard place; we need a job to get licensed and we need to be licensed to get a job. The vast majority of mental health agencies prefer to hire licensed clinicians who can work independently and be reimbursed by insurance. This is understandable, however, most private insurance panels require 3 years of licensed practice before a LMFT would be considered for reimbursement. You are looking at a minimum of 7 years (more realistically 8-9 years) of hard work and dedication to be possibly considered for a job. This barrier would be easily surmounted by MFTs holding a LMFTA.

A LMFTA would be granted to post-graduates who passed the National Licensure Exam, are confirmed and accounted for by the Department of Health at the beginning of their post-graduate clinical experience, and who continue to practice under the supervision of a LMFT. With a LMFTA, MFTs would be able to become credentialed sooner. This would benefit not only MFTs in getting a job more quickly and with more ease, but it would be a benefit to our communities to have more clinicians practicing under supervision in a much needed field.

Although I have not begun the tedious process of searching for a job yet, I know it is not an easy task. One of my close friends graduated from Fairfield University in December 2014 and is struggling to find a job that does not require licensure. She is still located at the site she was at for her internship, but she is not allowed to charge her clients more than \$50.00 per session due to not being licensed and I have seen her receive a two-week paycheck of less than \$10.00. This is not a very encouraging sight for me. I currently work part time at a chemical consulting firm as an Administrative Assistant. I have been at this job for four years and they have treated me very well. However, it is a very real fear of mine that I will be at this job for another four years due to my inability to get a job due to not being licensed. This thought turns my stomach, as I have invested an incredible amount of time and money working to complete the prerequisites required to prepare myself for a career doing what I truly love. To not even be able to utilize my Master's Degree and help people the way I want to is incredibly frustrating, as I imagine myself a year from now still at my current job, sitting in my cubicle, doing menial work that I am beyond over-qualified for while making \$14.00 an hour.

I urge you, just short of beg you, to support House Bill 6861 to create an associate license for MFTs. I thank you for the time you took to read this letter and for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Allison E. Price