

HB5521

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

I am a Licensed Psychologist in Connecticut and work in a large state agency. I am writing in strong opposition to HB 5521. I deal with a number of Master's and Bachelor's level "behaviorists" who work without licenses but have been given permission to practice in state funded settings providing services that are primarily Psychological. They sometimes introduce themselves as "Psychologists." As you know, the term "Psychological" is a term protected under state statutes, to apply only to doctoral level clinicians who must demonstrate that they have the required coursework, supervised experience, have passed a national licensing exam, have passed a state ethics and law exam, before they can call themselves "Psychologists". And, with good reason. Being a Psychologist is a demanding and challenging job because the welfare of people often depends on their competency. It is unfortunate that Master's and Bachelor's level people, who most often have little to no training and education to provide clinical services, are allowed to practice without a license when they should not be practicing, at all.

My cohorts in state service and I probably have the most experience in the state in dealing with unlicensed Master's level "clinicians" who are self-styled behavioral experts. Many violate the first ethical standard of professional practice which is to do no harm. Their lack of clinical expertise, largely an outcome of little to no education in the areas in which they attempt to practice, makes these people a liability to us all. These are the people who are either not eligible to acquire a Professional Counselor license or who do not feel the need. Either circumstance produces un-credentialed people who should be prevented from participating in clinical work.

The opportunity for Master's level folks to become licensed already exists. The DPH has provided an avenue for them to become credentialed clinicians, as Professional Counselors. I fear that HB 5521 would sanction a lower level of clinical skill for treating emotional and behavioral disorders which would be a disservice to all citizens of Connecticut, especially those who might believe that these people would be competent to help them or their loved ones. Psychologists have broad educational backgrounds and must have supervised experience before they can apply for a license. A Master's level person falls quite short of this necessary standard of education and training. Colleges and Universities do not produce Master's level students in Psychology with the idea that they will become practitioners. There is no basis for these people to become practitioners. You would have to change college curricula and set up new training programs to approximate what would be needed for people who have Master's degrees in psychology to be ready to practice after they acquire this 2 year graduate degree.

To some, the idea of having additional licenses in Psychology, even at the Master's level, might seem appealing. That would be the opinion of the uninitiated in clinical services. In my agency and in this country, we are experiencing a dramatic increase in the use of psychiatric medications to treat problems of every variety. The growth of the use of these medications is almost exponential. A pill for anything and all things. To deal with this tide of chemically invasive treatments, the only alternative is to have highly trained and well educated people in the

behavioral sciences i.e. Licensed Clinical Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Psychologists who can provide non-chemical interventions for people's problems.

In my position, I have seen the considerable confusion people (administrators as well as case managers) have concerning Psychiatry and Psychology as well as the other DPH licensed professions of LCSW, MFT's and Professional Counselors. Introducing another Master's level licensed professional, especially one that is not needed, would increase confusion about the services that existing licensed professions provide.

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Sent from my iPhone