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H.B. 6294 Testimony

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Caryl Schiff-Greatorex and I am a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC). Licensed Professional Counselors provide a range of mental health counseling services to children, adolescents, adults, and families. They practice as clinicians in outpatient, inpatient, and other mental health settings, treating those with anxiety, depression, and other behavioral health disorders.

I am writing to you regarding an issue essential to the integrity and the future well-being of the profession of counseling, H.B. 6294 *An Act Concerning Qualification for Licensed Professional Counselors*.

Currently, the requirements for the LPC are completing 60 graduate semester hours in counseling on specified content areas, achieving a passing score on the National Counselor Examination, and acquiring 3,000 hours of postgraduate-degree-supervised counseling experience. This bill would count graduate internship hours toward the 3,000 hour supervision, thereby decreasing the total number of required postgraduate-degree hours needed prior to licensure.

I am strongly opposed to H.B. 6294 for the following reasons:

- **A 3,000 hour post-degree supervision period is a basic professional standard for mental health clinicians of all disciplines.** Other independently licensed master's level mental health professionals, such as Licensed Clinical Social Workers, are required to complete this basic 3,000 hour post-degree period of supervised experience prior to licensure. This reduction in required hours of supervised, post-degree counseling experience would place LPCs out of step with the minimum basic standards for licensure as an independent mental health clinician in our state.
- **Our consumers deserve the best clinical mental healthcare possible.** Reducing minimum supervision hours would allow recent counseling graduates to achieve licensure with considerably less experience than the legislature initially intended when it approved counselor licensure. This would have the effect of placing consumers at heightened risk for harm.

- Similar to the requirements in Connecticut, Licensed Professional Counselors in most other states are required to complete a 3000 hour post-degree period of supervised experience prior to licensure. Reducing the minimum supervised, post-degree counseling hours would also make training requirements for LPCs in Connecticut less stringent than training requirements in other states.
- At a time when the Counseling profession is working towards nationalized standards and license portability from state to state, this bill would be counterproductive to that effort.

Why would you want to set a new national precedent by requiring less training for licensed mental health professionals?

Therefore, I urge you to vote against the passage of H.B. 6249 and in doing so maintain the basic 3,000 hour requirement for post-degree supervision for Licensed Professional Counselors.

Respectfully,

Caryl Schiff-Greatorex

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