



Jenna Harma, President
Connecticut Counseling Association
March 3, 2015

Testimony in opposition to H.B. 6294

To the esteemed members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Jenna Harma, and I am the President of the Connecticut Counseling Association (CCA), the professional organization that represents counselors, counseling graduate students, and counselor educators and supervisors in our state. I have also been a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) for the last ten years. I am writing to express opposition as both CCA President and an LPC to the proposed bill H.B. 6294 *An Act Concerning Qualification for Licensed Professional Counselors*.

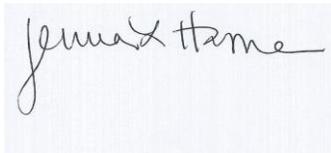
Since counselors were granted licensure in CT in 1998 we have been trying to maintain our status among the other master's level mental health disciplines in the state as the newest and less well-known. We compete and are qualified for the same jobs and are trained to provide the same level of clinical service and expertise to our clients. The educational, post-graduate supervised experience, and exam requirements for LPC's in CT are almost identical to the other prominent mental health licenses in the state (i.e. Licensed Clinical Social Workers and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists). The LPC requirements in CT are also comparable to those of master's level licensed counselors in other states, aligning with the national standard for adequate training.

Our current requirements uphold a rigorous licensing process that promotes the licensing of clinicians with ample ability to practice independently, comparable to those of other mental health disciplines. This is a protective factor for a potential client looking to gain access to counseling services. A reduction in the number of post-graduate supervised clinical hours for licensure, as H.B. 6294 is proposing, would weaken CT LPC requirements to be below the national and state standard for independent master's level mental health practitioners. Moreover, reducing the amount of supervised experience required prior to licensure would allow recent graduates to receive their LPC with considerably less experience than the legislature originally intended. As the professional association that represents LPC's, CCA's goal is to support legislation that promotes the strength and integrity of the license by maintaining its value to create sufficiently trained clinicians. A reduction in the amount of supervised experience required prior to licensure weakens the license, promotes the licensing of inadequately trained LPC's, and therefore creates a risk of potential increased harm to consumers.

As an LPC and as a long standing leader in the professional association that works to promote what is in the best interest of the counseling profession, I urge you to maintain the current LPC requirement of 3000 post-graduate supervised clinical hours, separate from graduate internship hours. Maintaining the current standard for training not only establishes equity between LPC's and other master's level licensed clinicians in the state and nationally, but it also promotes consumer protection by ensuring licensing of well-trained counselors. Supporting this proposed bill jeopardizes this and diminishes the quality of the license. I hope you will oppose H.B. 6294.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jenna L. Harma". The signature is written in black ink on a light blue, textured background.

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