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OPPOSITION TO H.B. 6294

Dear Senator Gerratana (Co-Chair), Representative Ritter (Co-Chair) and
Members of the Public Health Committee:

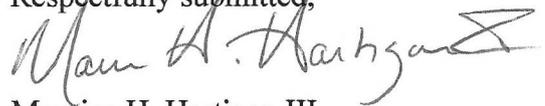
Please accept this as my opposition to the proposed bill that calls for a change to the professional counselor licensure statute to allow applicants for licensure to count pre-degree “internship” hours toward the requirement of 3,000 post-degree hours of supervised counseling experience. The summary of this bill misleadingly suggests that it is intended to “expand the offering of mental health services.” The actual effect of the bill would instead be to weaken clinical training requirements and allow for inadequately trained and experienced counselors to provide mental health services.

The rigorous training standards for professional counselors serve to protect the public and ensure the provision of skilled, competent therapeutic care. Students in counselor education programs currently gain their first experience in the field by serving as interns as a component of their masters degree programs. Upon receipt of their degree (and successful completion of a national standard exam), counselors must then gain 3,000 hours of *post*-degree, supervised experience prior to the receipt of their license. With no stated justification for the proposed change, H.B. 6294 essentially proposes a “double-dipping,” whereby a counselor could apply the pre-degree experience to the post-degree requirement. This undermining of the training standards would not only place LPCs in

Connecticut out of step with counselors in other states (where 3,000 hours of post-degree supervised experience is standard), but also out of step with other mental health providers in Connecticut (*e.g.*, Licensed Clinical Social Workers, for whom 3,000 hours of post-degree supervised experience is also required).

As a member of the Connecticut Counseling Association, I join in and support the testimony provided by the CCA in opposition to HB 6294, and urge the committee to reject this ill-advised proposal.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Maurice H. Hartigan III".

Maurice H. Hartigan III