



Connecticut Counseling Association
Testimony before the Public Health Committee
March 4, 2015

H.B. 6294 Testimony

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and esteemed members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Dr. Misty Ginicola and I am the President of the Connecticut Counseling Association's (CCA) Connecticut Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (CACES). For 88 years, CCA has been the professional association that acts for Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs), of which there are currently 2,218 in the state of Connecticut.

My testimony today is on behalf of the CCA and CACES on H.B. 6294 *An Act Concerning Qualification for Licensed Professional Counselors*. We feel that this act will seriously negatively impact the quality of training and service for LPCs in Connecticut.

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, which would significantly reduce the postgraduate supervision hours.

We at CACES are strongly opposed to H.B. 6294 for the following reasons:

1. **This greatly reduces the number of hours of much-needed supervision that counselors-in-training receive.** Students, within the program in which I am employed, are required to intern in a clinical mental health setting for 700 hours prior to graduation. Although their training in the graduate program is excellent, students in fieldwork are interns, are slowly being exposed to counseling work and are not carrying a full-time caseload. This is crucial to their initial training. This internship experience does not suffice as postgraduate work, which is where the graduate is fully employed as a counselor. If these internship hours count towards their postgraduate supervision hours, their education and supervision will absolutely be compromised.
2. **Supervised postgraduate counseling experience is essential for Counselors in Training.** As a counselor educator, I can attest that our students are excellently prepared for counseling practice. However, the post graduate hours are just as crucial to solidify their counselor training and provide experiences with a wide

variety of clients, something that is necessary to develop multicultural competence in working with all clients, of all ethnicities. The limited experience that an intern gets is not equivalent to postgraduate counseling experience and will compromise the counseling trainee's skills if reduced.

3. **Our clients deserve and need the best clinical mental healthcare possible.** Reducing minimum postgraduate counseling and supervision hours does not improve quality for clients, rather it compromises it. This would place clients at a heightened risk for harm.

4. **A 3,000 hour post-degree supervision period is a basic professional standard for mental health clinicians of all disciplines and LPCs in other states.** 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 be incongruent with the minimum basic standards for licensure as an independent mental health clinician in our state. Consistent with requirements in Connecticut, LPCs 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.

With statistics indicating that approximately 20% of youth require serious mental health services and with heartbreaking events like violence in our communities and school shootings such as what occurred in Newtown, the urgent need for qualified mental health care has been underscored in recent years. H.B. 6294 would lower the standards for LPCs leading to less qualified counselors in the field. This is not in the best interest of the state, LPCs or the clients we serve.

We at CACES therefore urge the committee to oppose H.B. 6294 and to maintain the current high quality standard of 3,000 postgraduate hours of counseling experience.

Respectfully,



Misty M. Ginicola, PhD, LPC
Chair, Connecticut Association for Counselor Education and Supervision
<https://ccacounseling.com>

Associate Professor of Counseling and School Psychology
Southern Connecticut State University