



RE: House Bill 6861

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

My name is Maryann LaBella and I am a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT), full-time faculty at Fairfield University and Supervisor, approved by the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. I live in Redding, Connecticut and I teach/practice in Fairfield.

I am writing/speaking to you today to bring your attention to an important issue for MFTs in Connecticut. I am asking for your support of legislation that would create an "Associate," or LMFTA for Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) in our State.

- To become licensed, in the State of Connecticut an MFT must graduate from an accredited program, pass the National Licensure exam and accrue 1000 direct client contact hours with 100 hours of supervision. Typically, this takes 2 years of full time employment to accomplish.
- As an approved supervisor, I prepare my students for the post- graduate interview process for employment. I also provide pro bono supervision to MFTs who are working toward licensure. All too often, I hear stories of their struggles to find employment. The "saying" amongst alumni has become "*You need a job to get a license and you need a license to get a job.*" This catch 22 is precisely the barrier the LMFTA would remove. Just last week, I met with recent graduate of our program who reported this to be the case.
- Most mental health *agencies prefer to hire licensed clinicians who can work independently* and be reimbursed by insurance.
- Many private insurance panels require three years of licensed practice before clinicians can even be considered for reimbursement. Holding an LMFTA could quite feasibly start the clock to *help MFTs become credentialed sooner.*
- Attached to my testimony is a copy of a recent mental health provider job posting that I received just last week. It is a perfect illustration of the need for the LMFTA. The position asks for applicants who are a licensed MFT, LCSW, or LPC. A recent MFT graduate who has passed the exam and is

working toward licensure would be ineligible to apply for this position creating an inequity among mental health professionals and a potential shortage of MFTs amongst the mental health provider community in Connecticut. In essence, they would be left behind.

- Enhanced public protection is another positive outcome of the LMFTA because post-graduates will be required to pass the licensure exam and be confirmed and accounted for by the Department of Health at the beginning of their clinical experience, while they must still practice under supervision.
- For the DPH, administration of the LMFTA will be seamless because we are **not promoting an additional exam**. Back in 2009 we successfully advocated to allow post grads to sit for the licensure exam immediately after graduation, instead of waiting to accrue 1000 hours of client contact. Therefore, the DPH will not have to alter the licensure process or add additional steps except to simply issue the associate license to the applicant.
- Finally the recent unveiling of the Department for Children and Family's Plan4Children seeks to assure greater access to mental health services for children in our State, and it's critical that MFTs, who are explicitly trained to work with children within the context of the family, have parity with all affiliates and can be included in multidisciplinary teams as they emerge in schools, agencies and community health based settings.

I urge your support of HB 6861 to create an associate license for MFTs. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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Resent-From: ctamft@mail-list.com
From: CTAMFT E-Classifieds <manager@ctamft.org>
Subject: Job Opportunity: [REDACTED]
Date: March 11, 2015 10:32:03 AM EDT
To: maryann@labellatherapy.com

Staff Therapist Position Opening at [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

The [REDACTED] is looking for a licensed MFT, LCSW or LPC to join our group practice in [REDACTED], CT. We are a group of nine therapists, a psychiatrist, two APRNs, and an administrative staff serving the mental health needs of clients in the greater Shelton area. We are specifically looking for a seasoned therapist who works collaboratively to provide high caliber mental health services. Flexible hours (20-25 client-hours per week, including evening and/or Saturday hours).

We are particularly interested in candidates who meet the following criteria:

- Excellent individual/family therapy and psycho-educational skills
- Expertise in working with adolescents & their parents
- Engaged, positive, energetic role model with proven competence working in a team environment
- Ability to effectively provide faith-based therapy

Note: If the therapist-candidate is already in-network with the major insurance panels, that is a plus.

Please send letter of interest and CV to [REDACTED]. We encourage applicants to visit our website at [REDACTED] for more information about our agency.

If you have information to post on our announcement service, please send an e-mail to manager@ctamft.org and put CTAMFT E-CLASSIFIEDS REQUEST in the subject line. All lines in your announcement should be flush left. Be sure to include what you'd like the subject line to read when it is distributed, as well as all contact information.

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