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February 27, 2016

RE: SB 99- AN ACT CONCERNING BENEFITS PAYABLE FOR ASSESSMENTS TO DETERMINE A DIAGNOSIS OF A CONDITION AND RELATED CONSULTATIONS

Dear Senator Crisco, Representative Megna, and members of the Insurance Committee:

I am a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) and full-time faculty at Fairfield University. I live in Redding and I teach/practice in Fairfield. I am also Legislative Liaison for the Connecticut Association for Marriage and Family Therapists (CTAMFT).

I am writing to you in support of SB 99 however, I have several concerns regarding language as it relates to Marital and Family Therapists.

As the instructor who teaches *Assessment Techniques in Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT)* in the Fairfield University MFT Program, I am familiar with what is required to perform thorough and accurate assessments and diagnoses for the wide range of mental disorders outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DMS-5). MFTs, along with other behavioral health care providers must assess clients and families from a biopsychosocial perspective, which takes into consideration biological factors, as well as psychological, contextual, relational and social influences of mental disorders. This type of rigorous assessment surely requires more multiple visits and best practice suggests assessment to be an ongoing process.

IN the DSM-5, The American Psychiatric Association states,

“... it is not sufficient to simply check off the symptoms in the diagnostic criteria to make a mental disorder diagnosis. Although a systematic check for the presence of these criteria as they apply to each patient will assure more reliable assessment, the relative severity and valence of individual criteria and their contribution to a diagnosis ... [and] requires clinical training to recognize when the combination of predisposing, precipitating perpetuating, and protective factors has resulted in a psychopathological condition in which physical signs and symptoms exceed normal ranges.

To that end, the teaching provided during clinical training stresses the importance of ongoing assessment.

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References

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press (DSM).

Williams, L., Edwards, T. M., Patterson, J., & Chamow, L. (2011). *Essential assessment skills for couple and family therapists*. New York: Guilford Press.