



Testimony of Dr. Louisa Foss-Kelly, Connecticut Counseling Association

SB 133: An Act Concerning Licensure for Professional Counselors

Public Health Committee, February 24, 2016

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and esteemed members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Dr. Louisa Foss-Kelly and I am an Associate Professor of Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Southern Connecticut State University. I am also the Connecticut Counseling Association's President-Elect and Public Policy and Legislation Committee Chair.

The Connecticut Counseling Association (CCA) is the organization in Connecticut that represents Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC). The members of the CCA play a vital part in the state's public and private mental health services. CCA members provide individual, family, and group psychotherapy in a variety of settings, including community counseling agencies, inpatient and partial hospitalization programs, chemical dependency and addiction services, and countless others. **We thank you for raising Senate Bill 133 and offer our strong support for the bill with an amendment that we have attached.**

Mental health practice in Connecticut has rapidly evolved over the past decade, however the statutes regulating counseling practice in Connecticut (Sec. 20-195) have not been significantly updated in the past fifteen years. Therefore there is an immediate need for professional counselors in Connecticut to update the current statutes, so that our statutes are consistent with regulations and standards common across the nation.

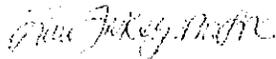
SB 133 would create a two-tiered licensure structure to allow individuals graduating from a program that meets specific training criteria to apply to be a **Licensed Master Professional Counselor (LMPC)** immediately upon graduation. LMPCs would practice counseling under the supervision of an independently licensed mental health clinician. The current counseling license (LPC) would be renamed **Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC)**. This two-tiered structure is used in 37 states and is similar to the social work license in Connecticut and the proposed MFT legislation (SB 68).

SB 133 would also greatly **enhance curricular and supervision standards**. It would require graduate coursework equivalent to the accreditation standards of the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) or the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE), the national gold standard in counselor education and supervision.

I also want to briefly mention that we have attached language which clarifies some parts of the bill. The language also seeks to ensure that aspiring counselors are able to still qualify for licensure if they are following current guidelines.

Let me conclude by saying that the need for excellent mental healthcare has never been greater in Connecticut. SB 133 would facilitate a seamless entry for counselors beginning their careers in the mental healthcare workforce. SB 133 would also significantly strengthen training and supervision requirements of Connecticut's licensed professional counselors so that they are consistent with national trends and best practices in counselor education and supervision. We therefore urge the committee to support SB 133 for the benefit of professional counselors and the many individuals they serve.

Respectfully,



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Chair, CCA Public Policy and Legislation Committee
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Connecticut Counseling Association
Proposed Amendment to SB133- AN ACT CONCERNING LICENSING FOR PROFESSIONAL
COUNSELORS

Sec. 2. Section 20-195bb of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective October 1, 2016):

(a) Except as provided in subsection (c) of this section, no person may practice professional counseling unless licensed pursuant to section 20-195cc, as amended by this act.

(b) No person may use the title "licensed professional counselor", "licensed clinical professional counselor", "clinical professional counselor", "licensed master professional counselor", or a "master professional counselor" or make use of any title, words, letters or abbreviations that may reasonably be confused with licensure as a clinical professional counselor or a master professional counselor unless licensed pursuant to section 20-195cc, as amended by this act.

Comment [1]: Licensed Professional Counselor also should not be utilized by non licensed individuals as it would confuse consumers and has been a commonly used term.

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Sec. 3. Section 20-195cc of the 2016 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective October 1, 2016):

(a) The Commissioner of Public Health shall grant a license as a clinical professional counselor or a master professional counselor to any applicant who furnishes evidence satisfactory to the commissioner that such applicant has met the requirements of section 20-195dd, as amended by this act. Licensed Masters Professional Counselors may practice for a period of thirty-six months, with an option to renew the license for an additional thirty-six months. The commissioner shall develop and provide application forms. The application fee shall be three hundred fifteen dollars.

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Comment [2]: We are seeking to limit how long the LMPC may practice so that LMPCs cannot accrue hours in perpetuity before becoming an LCPC.

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(b) Licenses issued under this section may be renewed annually pursuant to section 19a-88. The fee for such renewal shall be one hundred ninety-five dollars. Each licensed clinical professional counselor and licensed master professional counselor applying for license renewal shall furnish evidence satisfactory to the commissioner of having participated in continuing education programs. The commissioner shall adopt regulations, in accordance with chapter 54, to (1) define basic requirements for continuing education programs [which] that shall include not less than one contact hour of training or education each registration period on the topic of cultural competency, not less than three hours on the topic of professional ethics and, on and after January 1, 2016, not less than two contact hours of training or education during the first renewal period in which continuing education is required and not less than once every six years thereafter on the topic of mental health conditions common to veterans and family members of veterans, including (A) determining whether a patient is a veteran or family member of a veteran, (B) screening for conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, risk of suicide, depression and grief, and (C) suicide prevention training, (2) delineate qualifying programs, (3) establish a system of control and reporting, and (4) provide for a waiver of the continuing education requirement for good cause.

Comment [3]: We seek to include at least three hours of professional ethics to be included in continuing education.

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Sec. 4. Section 20-195dd of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective October 1, 2016):

(a) Except as otherwise provided in [subsections (b) and (c) of] this section, an applicant for a license as a clinical professional counselor shall submit evidence satisfactory to

the [Commissioner of Public Health] commissioner of having: (1) Completed a graduate degree in counseling including sixty semester hours in counseling at a program accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Disorders (CACREP), the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE), or a regionally accredited institution of higher education with coursework and internship and fieldwork requirements equivalent to CACREP or CORE accredited institutions; (2) acquired three thousand hours of postgraduate-degree-supervised experience in the practice of professional counseling, at least one thousand of which must involve evaluation and treatment of clients, performed over a period of not less than two years, that included an average of one hour of clinical supervision per week provided by (A) a professional counselor licensed, or prior to October 1, 1998, eligible for licensure, pursuant to section 20-195cc, (B) a psychologist licensed pursuant to chapter 383, (C) a marital and family therapist licensed pursuant to chapter 383a, or (D) a clinical social worker licensed pursuant to chapter 383b; (3) earned, from a regionally accredited institution of higher education, a master's or doctoral degree in social work, marriage and family therapy, or a person entitled to perform similar services, under a different designation, in another state or jurisdiction whose requirements for practicing in such capacity are substantially similar to or higher than those of this state; and (3) passed an examination prescribed by the commissioner. For purposes of this section, the Department of Public Health shall accept any hours, acquired pursuant to this chapter of the statutes, accrued prior to October 1, 2016 by prospective licensed clinical professional counselors.

(b) Except as otherwise provided in this section, an applicant for licensure as a master professional counselor shall submit evidence satisfactory to the commissioner of having: (1) Completed sixty graduate semester hours in counseling at a regionally accredited institution of higher education, that included coursework that meets the accreditation requirements of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, the National Council on Rehabilitation Education, or a regionally accredited institution of higher education with coursework and internship or fieldwork requirements equivalent; (2) Licensed Masters Professional Counselors may only practice professional counseling under supervision, receiving on average one hour of clinical supervision per week provided by (A) a professional counselor licensed, or prior to October 1, 1998, eligible for licensure, pursuant to section 20-195cc, (B) a psychologist licensed pursuant to chapter 383, (C) a marital and family therapist licensed pursuant to chapter 383a, or (D) a clinical social worker licensed pursuant to chapter 383b.

(b)(c) An applicant for licensure as a clinical professional counselor or a master professional counselor by endorsement shall present evidence satisfactory to the commissioner that the applicant is licensed or certified as a professional counselor, or as a person entitled to perform similar services under a different designation, in another state or jurisdiction whose requirements for practicing in such capacity are substantially similar to or higher than those of this state and that there are no disciplinary actions or unresolved complaints pending.

(c)(d) An applicant who is currently licensed or certified as a clinical professional counselor or a master professional counselor or [its] the equivalent in another state, territory or

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Comment [4]: Language added to require CACREP or CACREP equivalent for future licensed clinical professional counselor.

Deleted: Completed sixty graduate semester hours in or related to the discipline of counseling at a regionally accredited institution of higher education, [which] that included coursework in each of the following areas: (A) Human growth and development, (B) social and cultural foundations, (C) counseling theories and techniques or helping relationships, (D) group dynamics, (E) processing and counseling, (F) career and lifestyle development, (G) appraisals or tests and measurements for individuals and groups, (H) research and evaluation, and (I) professional orientation to counseling

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Deleted: earned, from a regionally accredited institution of higher education a master's or doctoral degree in social work, marriage and family therapy.

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Comment [5]: Want to ensure that prospective counselors that began accre

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Comment [6]: Want to ensure that CACREP or CORE equivalency progr

Deleted: ; (2) acquired one hundred hours of supervisory experience in the

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Comment [7]: The LMPC category is intended for recent graduates. It would

commonwealth of the United States may substitute three years of licensed or certified work experience in the practice of professional counseling in lieu of the requirements of subdivision (3) of subsection (a) of this section, provided the commissioner finds that such experience is equal to or greater than the requirements of this state.

Note in the following statutes we would request that licensed masters professional counselors not be included since they will have less training than the licensed clinical professional counselors. We ask they be removed from sections 9, 14 and 15, as amended below.

Sec. 9. Subsection (f) of section 17a-78 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2016*):

(f) Any clinical social worker licensed under chapter 383b, advanced practice registered nurse licensed under chapter 378 or ~~clinical professional counselor~~ ~~or master professional counselor~~ licensed under chapter 383c who has (1) received a minimum of eight hours of specialized training in the conduct of direct evaluations as a member of any emergency mobile psychiatric services team under contract with the Department of Children and Families, and (2) reasonable cause to believe, based on a direct evaluation of a child, that such child (A) has psychiatric disabilities, (B) is dangerous to himself or others or gravely disabled, and (C) is in need of immediate care and treatment may issue an emergency certificate that requires the hospitalization of such child for a psychiatric and medical evaluation. Such child shall be evaluated not later than twenty-four hours after the issuance of the emergency certificate and shall not be held for more than seventy-two hours pursuant to such certificate unless committed pursuant to section 17a-77. The Commissioner of Children and Families shall collect and maintain statistical and demographic information pertaining to emergency certificates issued under this subsection.

Sec. 14. Subdivision (7) of section 20-195m of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2016*):

(7) "Under professional supervision" means the practice of clinical social work under the supervision of a physician licensed pursuant to chapter 370, an advanced practice registered nurse licensed pursuant to chapter 378, a psychologist licensed pursuant to chapter 383, a marital and family therapist licensed pursuant to chapter 383a, a clinical social worker licensed pursuant to this chapter or a ~~clinical~~ professional counselor ~~or a master professional counselor~~ licensed pursuant to chapter 383c; and

Sec. 15. Subsection (a) of section 20-195s of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2016*):

(a) An individual licensed as a master social worker pursuant to section 20-195n may: (1) Practice clinical social work under professional supervision; and (2) offer a mental health diagnosis provided such diagnosis is offered in consultation with a physician licensed pursuant to chapter 370, an advanced practice registered nurse licensed pursuant to chapter 378, a psychologist licensed pursuant to chapter 383, a marital and family therapist licensed pursuant to chapter 383a, a ~~clinical~~ professional counselor ~~or a master professional counselor~~ licensed pursuant to chapter 383c or a clinical social worker licensed pursuant to this chapter. Except as provided in subsection (c) of section 20-195q, a licensed master social worker may not engage in independent practice.