

STUDENT SUPPORT FOR SB 133
An Act Concerning Licensure for Professional Counselors

February 22, 2016

Testimony before the Public Health Committee

RE: Senate Bill 133 *An Act Concerning Licensure for Professional Counselors*

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

The mental health field consists of a diverse array of helping professionals who come from a variety of training backgrounds. Consumers of mental health are expected to navigate this confusing system in search of a qualified professional to assist them. Often times, I hear from individuals who are frustrated by this system, not knowing how to find a trained professional with appropriate education and qualifications to aid them in their struggles. As they attempt to navigate this system their stress increases and thus their need for services may increase. We need your assistance in helping the public understand who may help them and in ensuring that the professionals have the proper education and training to do so.

It is imperative that we help the public and the counseling professionals by approving SB 133 with the Connecticut Counseling Association's (CCA) proposed changes incorporated. Not only will SB 133 help clearly define a counselor's credentials clearly upon graduation from an accredited program, but it will also ensure that everyone graduating and obtaining licensure will have the training and education necessary to help the public. There is a wide range of academic rigor amongst training programs and the consumer should not have to take on the responsibility of finding out which schools provided the proper training. Requiring a standard for education and training maintains the integrity of the profession in Connecticut while establishing the state's devotion to high quality care for residents.

Additionally, SB 133 with CCA's amendments would assist students, who have dedicated years towards their education and training, the opportunity to obtain a suitable job in mental health that allows them to receive the supervision and experience they need to further their careers. Upon moving to Connecticut, I was surprised to learn that the standard in mental health counseling was not a two tiered licensure system and thus behind many other states and even other disciplines. Connecticut should be joining the many other states with a two-tiered licensure systems and standards for education and training to obtain licensure.

I hope that you will support SB 133 with CCA's proposed changes to advance Connecticut's mental health field, support current counseling students and Connecticut's future workforce, increase the strength of the counseling profession as a whole, and support the public by providing high standards for mental health care.

Sincerely,

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