

Testimony before the Public Health Committee  
RE: Senate Bill 133 An Act Concerning Licensure for Professional Counselors  
Public Health Committee, February 23, 2016

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

My name is Jennifer Parzych and I am a member of the executive board of the Connecticut School Counselor Association (CSCA). As a state association representing over 2500 members including professional school counselors, graduate students, retired school counselors, and related partners, the CSCA executive board wishes to voice our support for SB 133 if the changes proposed by the Connecticut Counseling Association (CCA) are accepted.

It is our understanding that SB 133 would create a two-tiered licensure structure allowing graduates from an accredited master's program in counseling, and meeting the specific training criteria, to apply to be a Licensed Master Professional Counselor (LMPC). All LMPCs would be under the direct supervision of an independently licensed mental health counselor. The CCA proposed changes to SB 133 also include renaming the current counseling license (LPC) to Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC). Connecticut would not be alone in this two-tiered structure; in fact, it is currently the structure in place in 37 states, is similar to the Connecticut social work license, and is also in line with the proposed MFT legislation (SB 68).

A key component of SB 133 relates to the training and supervision of LMPCs. This includes the requirement that graduate coursework meets the equivalent of the national gold standard's counseling profession's accrediting body, the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs (CACREP) or the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE). Such a requirement will ensure that graduates entering the counseling field in our state are from quality programs, and are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective practitioners.

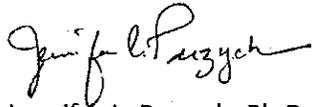
The CSCA is concerned with the limited access school counselors have in referring families to reputable and reliable counseling resources in their communities. According to our national organization the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), in their 2015 revised position statement on school counselors and student mental health, "Students' unmet mental health needs pose barriers to learning and development. Because of school counselors' training and position, they are uniquely qualified to provide education, prevention, intervention and referral services to students and their families" (ASCA, 2015, p. 58).

Referrals to counselors in the community are necessary when additional assistance is essential to treat mental health issues including, but not limited to, suicidal ideation, violence, abuse and depression. With the limited number of LPCs currently in our state, families of students needing outside of school counseling often find themselves on long waiting lists for these vital

services. This proposed change to licensure laws would allow for recent graduates with the most up-to-date knowledge of current trends in evidence-based counseling to practice under the supervision of LPCs (new- LCPCs), thereby providing improved access for our K-12 students most in need of mental health services.

For the reasons outlined above, the CSCA executive board urges the committee to support SB 133 for the benefit of professional counselors and the many individuals they serve.

Respectfully submitted,



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Reference:

ASCA (2015). Position statements: School counselors and student mental health. Retrieved from [http://schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/PositionStatements/PS\\_StudentMentalHealth.pdf](http://schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/PositionStatements/PS_StudentMentalHealth.pdf)