

Opposition: Raised Bill 133: An Act Concerning Licensure for Professional Counselors
Reviewed via Public Hearing via the Public Health Committee on 2/24/16

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

My name is Jessica Pawlik-York from Bristol, CT and I am Administrator and Faculty Member at Post University. I am opposed to SB 133 which would create a two-tiered licensure structure for Licensed Professional Counselors in the State of Connecticut. My concerns lie in that the two-tier licensure structure is confusing for the general public, students, as well as other interested parties. The present statutes are clear and understandable to all and I support them being kept in place. Additionally, I am concerned that:

-Only programs which have the word "counseling" in the title will be allowed the opportunity for licensure. Under the present statutes, programs which are "counseling-related" are allowed the critical opportunity to become licensed. For example in Connecticut, students in Human Service programs are provided exceptional and outstanding education in the field of counseling and would be excluded from licensure due to this technicality.

-The proposed structure focuses on allowing only graduates from CACREP-approved/CORE-approved or CACREP/CORE equivalent programs the chance to become licensed. This terminology is highly exclusive and vague in what is considered an acceptable training program. Students from Human Services program are excluded. The statutes should be updated to include programs which are approved/equivalent to the guidelines outlined by the Council for Standards in Human Service Education.

-SB 133 would allow individuals with little to no experience or supervision to become licensed upon graduation which is a concern to public safety and welfare.

-The proposed two-tier structure has little distinction of scope and practice and is more exclusionary than inclusive to providers interested in seeking this essential license.

If the Public Health Committee does support the two-tiered licensure structure, I would like to suggest that the following more inclusive language be added to the statutes as indicated below:

Sec. 4. Section 20-195dd of the general statutes:

(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 or related to the discipline of counseling at a regionally accredited institution of higher education, that included coursework that meets the accreditation requirements of either the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, the National Council on Rehabilitation Education, or the Council for Standards in Human Service Education; (2) acquired one hundred hours of supervised experience in the practice of professional counseling that is performed over a period of not less than one year under professional supervision; (3) acquired six hundred hours in the practice of clinical mental health counseling, of which not less than two hundred forty hours involved direct client

contact offering psychosocial assessment and mental health counseling under professional supervision; and (4) passed an examination prescribed by the commissioner.

In summary, I therefore urge the committee to oppose SB 133 for the protection of professional counselors and the many individuals they serve. The present statutes in place for Licensed Professional Counselors in the state of CT are more than sufficient in providing highly qualified counseling professionals the opportunity to become licensed and should not be changed. A change in legislation will significantly impact present and future mental health professionals from seeking licensure as well as cause problems with the general public. Thank you for your consideration of the voice of the residents of Connecticut.

Respectfully,

Jessica Pawlik-York