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To: The Education Committee and General Assembly of the Connecticut Legislature

Date: March 12, 2017

Re: H.B. No. 7253 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING MINOR REVISIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES

I am asking for your support for HB 7253: An Act Concerning Minor Revisions and Additions to the Education Statutes, as pertaining to CT Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs).

In the aftermath of the Sandy Hook School tragedy, there has been a necessary focus on decreasing school violence and providing mental health services for students statewide. Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) are uniquely trained to work with families and larger systems, and offer significant contributions to students, families, school staff and administrators. Legislation passed several years ago provides parity for MFTs to be hired into public school positions, as school social workers, psychologists and counselors have enjoyed for many years. However, the current law still requires that MFTs meet more rigorous standards than those set for other mental health groups. As it stands, MFTs are the only mental health profession required to be fully licensed in order to obtain public school certification. Thus, once MFTs complete their graduate training, they are required to find employment elsewhere until they earn licensure (typically 2-3 years time). This limits employment opportunities for students who have specifically opted to train in school-based settings, and limits school systems from hiring productive, successful members of their multidisciplinary student support teams.

I graduated 12 years ago from the University of Connecticut with a master's degree in Human Development and Family Studies and a concentration in Marriage and Family Therapy. At that time, I had no option to pursue employment in a school setting, despite my desire to do so and specific training to work with children, their families, and the larger systems that influence student learning and behavior. After legislation was passed allowing MFTs to work in schools, I enrolled in CCSU's MFT school-based training track to complete the necessary coursework required for public school credentialing. As part of my school based practicum experience, I was placed in an elementary school in Newington, where I had the pleasure of working with a variety of teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, school psychologists, counselors and students. I shared a rich experience with other MFT students and gained an even deeper appreciation for the importance of multidisciplinary teamwork.

I urge you to support HB 7253 and provide an opportunity for school systems to support student learning and growth. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I appreciate your thoughtful consideration.

Best regards,



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