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To: The Education Committee and General Assembly of the Connecticut

Legislature Date: March 10, 2017 Re: H.B. No. 7253 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING MINOR REVISIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES

I write in support of the raised bill HB 7253: An Act Concerning various revision and addition to the education statutes for Connecticut's Marriage and Family Therapists. Prior to going back to school to complete my education, I worked with daycares and school systems. In 2016, I finished my Master's degree in Family Therapy, Magna Cum Laude. I worked very hard for this degree spending nearly 11 years to get it. The main stay of my work is school age children and thus working with the school system would be one of the best places to have me. During those 11 years that I was getting my education, I honed my skills and expertise in psychological abuse and in specific to work with children and families. I am now the author of two books on the subject of psychological abuse. And I am considered an expert in the field of psychological abuse.

I now work extensively with high conflict divorced families 90% of which involve school aged children. With over 75% of marriages ending in divorce during a child's formative years, it stands to reason that these children are still in the school system and needing extensive expertise of an MFT. And thus, someone like myself, with 2 Decades of work and expertise, would be beneficial to any school system. These children are the future of this country. And we need to ensure that we have enough options and trained professionals working in the school system including recently graduated MFT's who bring a new and energized feel with them. Sadly, it is near impossible to get into a school system with the present law and statutes in place.

What is important here is that it is our extensive training and education in

Marriage and Family Therapy that makes us suited for working in the school system. It is this same skill set that was recognized by the new laws allowing LMFT's or licensed MFT's to work in the schools. But was not realized at that time, is that recently graduated MFT's would and should be allowed to continue their work in the very educational sites where the main stay of their clientele is.

The way the present law is written, ie., MFTs students have to wait at least 12 months, before they are licensed and can apply for the State Department of Education's certificate, means the school cannot hire an MFT for a minimum of 1 year. This is impeding and disrupting the relationship between MFTs and the schools where they trained. And reducing the resources of trained professionals who have established a healthy rapport with the children. Stability and consistency is paramount to helping children. But more importantly, if a MFT student has created such a healthy relationship with the children, and is then not allowed after they graduate to continue, the children lose that connection and safety net that they just built up with the student.

The same laws need to be applied to MFT's that apply to others like Social Workers who, as of 2015, are granted associate licensure in 2015. By doing this, it gives the schools more options and choice in their hiring of mental health staff to support their specific population.

The current policy limits MFTs from continuing their internship work at one of the most important locations related to their field, the school system. This is a huge lost chance for both clinicians and clients that they are specifically trained to work with. I urge you to remove this constraint by supporting the bill HB 7253: An Act Concerning various revision and addition to the education statutes for Connecticut's Marriage and Family Therapists.

Thank you for your time and attention on this important matter,
Joan T. Kloth-Zanard, MFT, GAL, ADA advocate, RSS, ABI and LC