



March 6, 2023

The Honorable Saud Anwar, Co-Chair
The Honorable Cristin McCarthy Vahey, Co-Chair
The Honorable Heather Somers, Ranking Member
The Honorable Nicole Klarides-Ditria, Ranking Member
Public Health Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
Legislative Office Building, Rm 3000
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: HB 6837: AN ACT CONCERNING THE LICENSE RENEWAL FEE AND SCHEDULE FOR LICENSED CLINICAL SOCIAL WORKERS AND LICENSED MASTER SOCIAL WORKERS AND THE EXAMINATION REQUIREMENT FOR LICENSURE OF MASTER SOCIAL WORKERS

Chairman Anwar, Chairwoman McCarthy Vahey, Vice Chairwoman Marx, Vice Chairman Parker
Ranking Members Somers and Klarides-Ditria, and members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Rebecca Ruitto, a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, and Chair of the Connecticut Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (CTAMFT). I am submitting testimony today in regards to HB 6837, “An Act Concerning the License Renewal Fee and Schedule for Licensed Clinical Social Workers and Licensed Master Social Workers and the Examination Requirement for Licensure of Master Social Workers with a requested amendment to the bill. CTAMFT requests that you lower all the mental health professional licensure fees across the board and create parity within the field. We also request that you remove the “one-time renewal within 24 months” in the Marriage and Family Therapist Associate License and allow for continuous renewals. This change is in-line with the associate license renewals for social workers and professional counselors.

CTAMFT represents over 2,000 Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) throughout Connecticut. Marriage and Family Therapists are employed in various clinical settings throughout the state via: private outpatient treatment; community based and outreach programs; in-home services; school-based services; and agency inpatient and outpatient care, among others. Marriage and Family Therapists are specifically trained through a systemic lens, and have extensive training in treating individuals, couples, families and systems as problems arise.

Connecticut has continued to see an increase in mental health needs across children and adults. Diagnoses on an upwards trend include anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, adjustment disorders, and substance use disorders. This trend has increased the need for support in the form of outpatient, school-based, and higher level of care options (in-home, intensive

outpatient treatment, partial hospitalization, inpatient); as well as ongoing escalated needs involving additional systems (DCF, police, and court services).

There is an unnerving disparity between Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) licensure fees and our comparative colleagues (Social Workers and Professional Counselors). This continues to remain a barrier for MFTs entering and remaining in the profession. MFTs, despite having the same level of education and qualifications as our Social Worker and Professional Counselor colleagues, and despite our comparative share in meeting the mental health needs of Connecticut children, are currently the only mental health profession with a significantly higher licensure renewal rate.

The chart below demonstrates the alarming differences in the fee structures across these comparative mental health professions.

Fee Category	Marriage and Family Therapist	Professional Counselor	Social Workers
Associate License- Initial	\$125	\$220	\$220
Difference in cost	MFT associate license initial application is 55% less expensive than other professions	55% more expensive than MFTs, same cost as Social Workers	55% more expensive than MFTs, same cost as professional Counselors
Associate License Renewal	\$220	\$195	\$195
Difference in costs	MFT associate license renewal is 12% higher than other MH professional licenses	12% lower than MFTs and same as social workers	12% lower than MFTs and same as social workers
Full Licensure- Initial	\$315	\$315	\$315
Difference in costs	No difference	No difference	No difference
Full Licensure- Renewal	\$320	\$195	\$195
Difference in costs	MFT's renewal cost is 49% more than other professions EACH renewal period (every yr)	49% less than MFTs, same as Social Workers	49% less than MFTs, same as Professional Counselors
Full Licensure- Reinstatement	\$315	\$315	\$315

Difference in costs	No difference	No difference	No difference
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Currently, both social workers and professional counselors pay a renewal rate of \$195 for all license renewals (associate and full). The renewal rate for LMFTs each year is \$320; 64% higher than our comparative colleagues. If this legislation moves forward, Social Workers would renew their license once every 2 years for a two-year total of \$195. MFTs in the same 2 year-time frame, would be required to pay \$640 to keep their license, 228% higher than our comparative colleagues. Additionally, this legislation would make it 60% more expensive for MFTs to obtain even their initial licensure (\$315 compared to \$200).

Current statute requires providers who currently have a Marriage and Family Therapy Associate license (LMFTA) to renew this associate license after 2 years, with a cap of only one renewal permitted while they accrue the necessary client contact hours for full licensure. After 2 years as an LMFTA, providers need be a fully licensed Marriage and Family Therapist or lose their ability to practice. MFTs are the only mental health professionals in Connecticut that has this cap on associate license renewals. There are multiple reasons why a provider may not achieve full licensing in the allotted 4 years.

Barriers to full licensure include, starting a family, taking on caregiver roles, sometimes unexpectedly, difficulties finding a LMFT supervisor, or being in a workplace setting with lower volume of client contact hours. Marriage and Family Therapists are unlike other mental health professions in which we require 1,000 client contact hours that must be face to face (in person or virtually); administrative clinical tasks do not count towards hours as other professions do. **This unnecessary cap on associate license renewals has pushed clinically sound therapists out of the mental health workplace and left them with a master's degree in a field they cannot pursue.** MFTs are the only associate license with a requirement for renewal to keep active. MFT fees far exceed the initial application fee. MFTs are faced with a significantly higher cost barrier to continue to sustain their license.

I ask that the changes to Social Worker licensure fees and renewal frequency be applied across the board, including Marriage and Family Therapists, Marriage and Family Therapist Associates, Licensed Professional Counselors, and Licensed Professional Counselor Associates. Please do not pick winners and losers in the mental health profession. This action could have a detrimental impact on the future of the MFT profession in Connecticut, as it would incentives future individuals entering the mental health field to choose social work over the other mental health professions.

The ability to remain licensed and in practice should be achievable by all mental health professionals, not reserved for a single license.

I urge you to amend and pass HB 6837 creating parity in licensure fees amongst mental health professions as well as remove the one-time renewal within 24 months for the MFT Associate License. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Ruitto, LMFT

Rebecca Ruitto, LMFT
CTAMFT Chair