

1/18/26

RE: Support for House Bill No. 7064

Dear Committee,

My name is Sara Iacovelli, LMFTA, and I am an associate marriage and family therapist at Hope Family Therapy in Wakefield, Rhode Island. As an associate clinician who is professionally affected by Rhode Island's current licensure requirements, I am writing to express my strong support for **House Bill No. 7064**, which has the potential to positively impact stakeholders around the state.

HB 7064 **reduces direct client contact hour requirements for licensure, strengthens role-specific training** by requiring a portion of supervised experience to be with **couples and families**, and **reduces unnecessary barriers to licensure portability across states**.

Some of the potential benefits of this bill include:

Modernize RI Licensure Law Toward National and Regional Parity

Rhode Island's direct client contact hour requirements for MFT licensure are among the highest in the nation and exceed the national average. Reducing the direct client contact hour requirement modernizes Rhode Island's licensure law in our profession and brings us closer to national norms.

More importantly, changes in HB 7064 make Rhode Island licensure more comparable to other states in our region—particularly Connecticut and Massachusetts—keeping Rhode Island competitive as therapists consider where to live and work. These updates are designed to make it more favorable for clinicians trained in Rhode Island to stay and practice in Rhode Island, rather than seeking licensure and employment in neighboring states.

Modernizing requirements also helps close potential loopholes that can arise when licensure standards differ substantially across neighboring states. Aligning Rhode Island's licensure expectations with the regional landscape reduces incentives for individuals to circumvent requirements elsewhere and then transfer back into Rhode Island, while still supporting fair and efficient mobility for qualified clinicians in good standing.

Removes Unnecessary Burdens for Licensure

There is no evidence that excessive postgraduate supervision requirements produce higher-quality therapists. Higher numbers of required hours primarily serve to delay full licensure for clinicians who are otherwise qualified and ready to serve the mental health needs of our community. Reducing hours to be more in line with national and regional standards ensures a more accessible, streamlined pathway to licensure.

More accessible pathways to licensure reduce unnecessary burdens for candidates and may help attract and retain qualified therapists to provide care in Rhode Island rather than relocating to neighboring states where licensure laws are more favorable.

Improves License Portability

Rhode Island is a small state within a highly interconnected region, and many Rhode Islanders live, work, and seek specialized services across state borders. In the digital age—where telehealth and cross-border continuity of care are increasingly common—reducing unnecessary barriers to dual licensure and endorsement simply makes sense for both clients and clinicians.

In my work thus far, I have found it is often very difficult to accept and support clients in Rhode Island due to licensure based restrictions. So many people in today's world have life and work that extends outside of the smallest state, and due to limitations it becomes a hazard to providing quality and continuous care.

Rhode Island is bleeding qualified clinicians due to the more favorable conditions in neighboring states for licensure. Many of the wonderful and highly qualified clinicians I trained with quickly left the state to seek licensure elsewhere or jumped over the border to Connecticut or Massachusetts to pursue licensure there. It's unfortunate to know that Rhode Island is losing providers because other states have more advanced policies on achieving licensure.

Lowering the hour requirements and focusing on more relational based hours strengthens clinicians in the field of marriage and family therapy. We are able to focus our training and move towards supporting more types of clients across the state. By allowing highly competent clinicians to achieve licensure more easily it allows for paneling with more insurance companies and therefore increases the populations in which we can serve.

My own personal experience currently feels somewhat limited due to only being able to accept a handful of insurance policies because they do not allow supervisory billing, which is exactly what an associate therapist must bill. I don't think I could count the number of potential clients I have had to turn away because I am unable to bill their insurance companies and they can not afford to pay out of pocket.

This change would have a big impact on not only my life but the life of future clients I hope to work with. At this point in my career I have approximately 700 post graduate hours over the course of 1.5 years. If this law did not change I may not become licensed for another 2+ years. Without my full license as previously mentioned I am unable to accept a large percentage of insurance companies and therefore unable to serve many of Rhode Island's individuals, couples, families, and children.

Reflects Current Quality Standards

HB 7064 preserves appropriate safeguards and strengthens role-specific training requirements in a way that supports public protection. While the bill moves Rhode Island toward parity by

reducing the direct client contact hour requirement, it also requires that a portion of those hours be specifically focused on couples and families—appropriate to the license being granted. This provides meaningful quality control for the profession and supports the systems-focused scope of Marriage and Family Therapy practice.

This bill additionally updates language surrounding educational practicum requirements to reflect current standards set forth by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE).

As an MFT professional, I strongly support this legislation. Many other states have pursued similar modernization efforts, and I am hopeful that Rhode Island will continue to update licensure laws in a way that strengthens the workforce and improves access to mental health services for the benefit of people across our state.

As such, I respectfully ask that you support HB 7064 and vote in its favor.

Thank you for the work that you do in responding to the needs of your constituency.

Sincerely,

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