



NEAFAST

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION
FOR FAMILY AND SYSTEMIC THERAPY

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On behalf of the New England Association for Family and Systemic Therapy (NEAFAST), representing over 1,000 active licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, I am writing to express our support for the Rhode Island Initiative H7064 “An Act Relating to Business and Professions—Mental Health Counselors and Marriage and Family Therapists.” This legislation updates the initial licensure requirements for MFTs in Rhode Island and streamlines licensure portability for MFTs already credentialed in other states.

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Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists are credentialed mental health professionals with expertise in psychotherapy and family systems. They are qualified to evaluate and treat mental and emotional disorders, applying clinical training that highlights the impact of relational dynamics on individual and family wellness. While the current shortage of mental health providers across the United States—including in Rhode Island—continues, qualified MFTs are facing barriers to efficient credentialing. H7064 gives Rhode Island an opportunity to align their MFT licensing requirements to the national standard, allowing an increase of MFTs from RI and neighboring states to contribute their expertise to the care of RI citizens in need.

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Many Rhode Island and Massachusetts communities are linked by shared workforce, educational institutions, and health facilities. Barriers to portability of licenses between the states prevents and/or delays qualified clinicians from being considered for vacancies in services in the other state. I recently communicated with a MFT, initially licensed in Massachusetts over 12 years ago, who had to delay her employment start at a Rhode Island-based community mental health agency by 3 months due to delays in her licensing. What she was told typically takes 6-8 weeks took over 4 months. H7064 could prevent future delays in client care, simplify procedures for this licensed MFT, and improve efficiency for the RI Department of Health staff's workload.

**Licensure & Legislation
Committee Advocacy
Team**

Chair, Rachel Blum Cantone, LMFT
Skeetz Edinger, LMFT

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NEAFAST supports the passing of H7064, ensuring that Rhode Island increases access to qualified mental health professionals and clarifies the pathway to licensure for MFTs in Rhode Island, while maintaining high standards for the mental health workforce.

Sincerely,

Rachel Blum Cantone, LMFT
Chair of Licensure and Legislation Committee
New England Association for Family and Systemic Therapy (NEAFAST)