



4/1/2026

RE: Support for Senate Bill No. 3026

Dear Committee,

My name is Jamie Blalock, PhD, MFT and I am an Assistant Professor in the Human Development and Family Science Department, and core faculty for the Couple and Family Therapy Program at the University of Rhode Island in Kingston, Rhode Island. As an educator, clinician, clinical researcher, and AAMFT-approved supervisor who is personally and professionally affected by Rhode Island's current licensure requirements, I am writing to express my strong support for **Senate Bill No. 3026**, which has the potential to positively impact stakeholders around the state.

I have been practicing couple and family therapist since 2020, received my PhD in couple and family therapy from The Ohio State University in 2023, and completed advanced training in couple and family therapy during my postdoctoral fellowship at the Family Institute in 2024. I am now one of the three full-time faculty who teach in the couple and family therapy master's program at the University of Rhode Island. In my faculty role within a Couple and Family Therapy program, I supervise trainees and am a qualified supervisor with an AAMFT supervision credential. However, my clinical practice has been necessarily part-time during my years of advanced academic training. As a result, I have spent many years practicing under supervision despite being an experienced clinician and supervisor. This limits my capacity to practice independently in the state of Rhode Island.

When I relocated from Illinois to join the faculty at URI, Rhode Island's unusually high direct client contact hour requirement prevented me from qualifying for full LMFT licensure here. At the same time, I meet full licensure requirements in most other states. In other words, I can supervise and train future therapists in Rhode Island, yet I remain unable to obtain full licensure in the very state where I live and work.

S3026 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 S3026 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. For example, clients sometimes seek specialty services across state lines. As a clinical-scholar with advanced training in evidence-based models and as AAMFT-approved supervisor, improving portability would reduce unnecessary licensure barriers and would support timely access to appropriate care. Additionally, as one of the three full-time faculty members of the **only** marriage and family training program in the state, streamlining licensure processes would ensure workforce stability, such that our graduates would be able to transition into the workforce within time parameters congruent with most other states, as well as create a pipeline for more graduates to become approved supervisor, which would address the supervisor shortage.

Reflects Current Quality Standards

S3026 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 educator, clinician, clinical researcher, and AAMFT-approved supervisor, 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 S3026 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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