

March 29, 2026

As the Graduate Program Director and a faculty member in the University of Rhode Island's Couple and Family Therapy (CFT) Program, and as a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 3026. This legislation represents an important and thoughtful step toward strengthening Rhode Island's mental health workforce while maintaining appropriate standards for public protection.

Senate Bill 3026 would reduce excessive direct client contact hour requirements for licensure, strengthen role-specific training by requiring that a portion of supervised experience be with couples and families, and remove unnecessary barriers to licensure portability across states. Collectively, these changes have the potential to positively impact clinicians, students, employers, and the individuals and families we serve throughout Rhode Island.

I can personally attest to the ways in which our current licensure laws create unnecessary barriers, not only for myself and other CFT faculty members, but also for the hundreds of students who have graduated from our program over the past two decades. Despite holding a PhD in Marriage and Family Therapy and meeting licensure requirements in neighboring states such as Connecticut, my own path to Rhode Island licensure was significantly delayed due to Rhode Island's unusually high direct client contact hour requirements. I was required to remain under supervision for an extended period, even while teaching, training, and supervising future therapists, an experience shared by several of my faculty colleagues.

This example illustrates how excessively high postgraduate requirements can create barriers for highly qualified clinicians, particularly those who contribute meaningfully to the workforce through teaching, supervision, research, and part-time clinical practice. These requirements do not reflect a lack of competence or readiness, but rather an outdated regulatory structure that delays full participation in the profession. I hope that my experience, and that of my colleagues, helps to contextualize the importance of the changes proposed in this bill.

Senate Bill would modernize Rhode Island's MFT licensure law and move it closer to national and regional parity. Currently, Rhode Island's direct client contact hour requirements exceed the national average and are higher than those of many neighboring states, including Massachusetts and Connecticut. Reducing these requirements brings Rhode Island in line with contemporary standards and helps ensure that our state remains competitive as clinicians decide where to live and practice. As an educator, I am deeply invested in retaining our talented graduates here in Rhode Island, rather than seeing them live in Rhode Island while practicing in Massachusetts or Connecticut due to more attainable licensure pathways.

Importantly, modernizing licensure requirements also reduces inconsistencies across neighboring states that can unintentionally create loopholes or incentives for clinicians to seek licensure elsewhere and later transfer back. Greater alignment promotes fairness, transparency, and mobility for qualified clinicians in good standing, while still upholding professional standards.

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There is no evidence that excessively high postgraduate supervision hour requirements produce higher-quality therapists. Instead, they primarily serve to delay licensure for clinicians who are otherwise competent, well-trained, and ready to meet the mental health needs of our communities. Aligning Rhode Island's requirements with national and regional norms creates a more accessible and efficient pathway to licensure, reduces unnecessary burdens for license candidates at both the master's and doctoral levels, and supports workforce recruitment and retention within the state.


Senate Bill 3026 also meaningfully improves licensure portability. Rhode Island is a small state within a highly interconnected region, where clinicians and clients routinely cross state lines for work, education, and care. In an era of telehealth and increased demand for continuity of care, reducing unnecessary barriers to dual licensure and endorsement benefits both clinicians and the individuals and families they serve.

At the same time, this bill preserves essential safeguards and strengthens quality standards. While it reduces the overall number of required direct client contact hours, it appropriately requires that a portion of those hours be specifically focused on couples and families, reflecting the systems-oriented scope of Marriage and Family Therapy practice. This role-specific training requirement enhances public protection and ensures that MFTs receive supervised experience aligned with the license they are seeking. This is an extremely beneficial aspect of the proposal. The bill also updates educational practicum language to reflect current standards established by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE).

As both an MFT professional and educator, I strongly support Senate Bill 3026. Many states have already adopted similar reforms through the Access MFTs initiative, and I am hopeful that Rhode Island will continue to modernize its licensure laws in ways that strengthen our workforce and expand access to high-quality mental health care.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support Senate Bill 3026 and vote in its favor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tiffani S. Kisler', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tiffani S. Kisler, PhD, LMFT
Clinical Professor
Program Director Couple & Family Therapy
Department of Human Development & Family Science
University of Rhode Island