



Maine Mental Health Counselors Association

LD 394

Chapter 117 comments

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and respected members of the Education and Cultural Affairs committee,

I am Bethany Noel Leavitt, and I represent the Maine Mental Health Counselors Association, currently serving as the Legislative Chair on the Board of Directors. MEMHCA remains the only professional organization in Maine working exclusively on behalf of clinical mental health counselors, and all those we aim to serve. We represent nearly 2000 Clinical Mental Health Counselors in Maine, each holding the licensure titled: “Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor” (LCPC). An LCPC holds a Master’s or Doctoral Degree and is licensed to be able to assess, diagnose, and treat mental health concerns.

I am writing to you today to testify and implore your judicious support of LD394 in the case that language revisions are accepted, as outlined below. The following comments are submitted in broad support of the provisional guidelines outlined in Chapter 117 (Rule Regarding Duties of School Counselors and School Social Workers).

Please note that the proposed changes clarify the roles/duties of various mental health professions within schools, which is **necessary** to avoid misinterpretation of the roles that these professionals provide. This will also reduce discrimination against different mental/behavioral health professions by employers (schools, in this case) who are hiring, and other staff members in school systems. Although different mental/behavioral health professions (listed below) have some differing roles that are unique to their specific type of licensure/qualification, the current legislation pertains to roles that overlap across all of the professions listed. Therefore, the proposed changes create the necessary parity between various mental/behavioral health professions who perform these common clinical mental/behavioral health service roles, but whose titles are not currently listed in the legislation. Additionally, the proposed changes assist in reducing harm caused by recent false information campaigns fueled by extremist groups, which that are destructive to schools and communities who rely on these mental/behavioral health services.

Proposed changes: School counselors work with *all* students in a school, not a subset. The first sentence of section 3 may be amended to read “...who help all students succeed...” to reflect

this. School counselors are trained and qualified to provide counseling services, and section 3, subsection B, number 6 may be read “Mental and Behavioral Health Counseling and Supports” as well as subsection B, number 2 reading “Academic /College and Career Readiness Guidance and Counseling” to explicitly express this. Lastly, in recognition of the fact that some clinical services are provided in schools by professionals who are not clinically trained social workers (e.g., LCPCs, LMFTs, LADCs, Psychologists), we suggest re-wording a segment of section 2 subsection A “Clinical Practice” to read “providers of these services (e.g., LCSWs, LCPCs, LMFTs, LADCs, Psychologists)...” so as to delineate some of these qualified providers, and revising a line in section 4 to read “Clinically licensed school social workers are among those professionals trained and qualified to provide clinical services. They are highly educated mental health professionals...” in order to make this explicit.

We are hoping to engage in what must become a strong, united collaboration to create a better quality of life for the populations we aim to serve, and the behavioral/mental health workforce in Maine and across the Nation.

Thank you kindly for your time and consideration.

In service, unity, and gratitude,

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Please note that I submitted testimony recently, but realized that the document I attached was accidentally a blank page. I attached the intended testimony to this submission. Thank you for your understanding.