



February 12, 2024

The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Chair, Finance Committee
3 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SB 409: Clinical Marriage and Family Therapists - Reciprocal Licensure Requirements

Dear Senator Beidle:

The Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors of Maryland (LCPCM) **OPPOSE SB 409**.

SB 409 is *not congruent with existing statutes and regulations* requiring Marriage and Family Therapists (MFT's), who currently practice in the State of Maryland, to meet specific licensure requirements under the Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists (BOPCT). It does not allow *mutual reciprocity* and nor does it require the BOPCT to determine if the requesting MFT's credentials "*are substantially equivalent*" to Maryland's regulatory licensure requirements; SB 409 seeks to reach a lesser "similar" standard.

LCPCM is very concerned the proposed changes to *allow lesser similar standards, limiting Maryland MFTs to have reciprocity with other states, and is not consistent with language in Maryland's regulatory model* for health professionals to meet substantially equivalent standards and may lead to client confusion and possibly increased risk for adverse outcomes.

We recognize there is a crisis with the shortage of mental health professions in Maryland, as many jurisdictions have a mental health professional shortage area. *However, it is our understanding the BOPCT is actively seeking to employ technology to expediate the application review process thereby negating the argument for streamlining with lesser standards. LCPCM believes SB 221, requested by the Maryland Department of Health and sponsored by the Chair of this committee, is the best bill to effectively address reciprocity and professional standards.*

As a result, we strongly **OPPOSE SB 409** entitled *Clinical Marriage and Family Therapists - Reciprocal Licensure Requirements* as this bill would alter the existing regulatory requirements to allow out-of-state MFTs to practice in our state.

Given the aforementioned concerns, we request the Committee give **SB 409 an UNFAVORABLE** report.

LCPCM appreciates the intent to increase access to mental health care and we thank you for the opportunity to share our views on this matter. If you have further questions concerning this written testimony, please contact this writer at hillarybethalexander@gmail.com.

Respectfully,

Hillary Alexander
President, LCPCM

cc: Members of the Senate Finance Committee