

From:
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#LGM848



Subject: Support HB 628

As a Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) licensed in the State of Maryland, I am submitting this written testimony in support HB 628, which seeks to ease licensure by endorsement requirements for marriage and family therapists in Maryland.

House Bill 628 will allow an MFT who is already fully licensed in another state and wishes to practice in Maryland to apply to the Maryland licensing board, and the board will grant the applicant a license on the basis of a valid, unencumbered license in another state without the need for additional documents or delay. I have outlined below the reasons why I support this bill and the positive impact it will have on Maryland residents and Maryland Licensed MFTs.

1. This bill will help increase access to qualified mental health providers across the state for Maryland residents. I specialize in working with clients who engage in ethical non-monogamy, kink/BDSM and alternative lifestyles. Currently, there is a limited number of clinicians licensed in Maryland who specialize in this topic area; and therefore, can't support the high demand from Maryland residents for knowledgeable clinicians in the specialty. On a continuous basis, I experience a waitlist in my practice. In addition, given the nature of seeing individuals/couples and the frequency of which I often need to connect my individual clients with a couple's therapist, and vice-a-versa, I struggle to find other licensed clinicians in my specialty to connect them to for additional therapy services. By passing HB 628, this would bring more qualified providers to Maryland to serve the Maryland population.
2. In general, regardless of specialty, as an MFT licensed in Maryland, I have seen firsthand the high demand for mental health support and services and the impact that provider shortages can have on those who need care. This legislation is important to Maryland because it increases the number of highly trained and qualified mental health providers to meet the needs of individuals, couples, and families seeking mental health care across the state.
3. Given the continued expansion of telehealth, I am experiencing many families and couples who are seeking couple or family therapy who reside in 2 or 3 different states. I have personally received requests for MD and DC, or MD and VA. Unfortunately, given the current barriers to licensure in multiple states, these referrals are struggling to find therapists licensed in all states each individual resides in. Because of these barriers and the burden to apply, I made the decision to not get licensed in other states; therefore, I have had to turn down these types of requests. Passing HB 628 will remove unnecessary licensing barriers to allow more licensed and qualified individuals the ability to practice in Maryland in addition to other states, granting access to therapy for potential couple/family clients living across state lines.

4. Lastly, in my research and consideration of licensure across the DMV as well as throughout the United States, it is clear that the requirements for licensure as an MFT and for continuing education to remain licensed as an MFT are relatively uniform from state to state. Across the country MFTs are being held to a high educational/training standard (including number of graduate education credits as well as number of clinical/supervision hours) for initial licensure as well as comprehensive and extensive continuing education requirements (including number of total hours and specific topic areas). Therefore, the clinicians that will seek licensure under HB 628 will be similarly skilled, proficient, and trained as the clinicians currently licensed under the current Maryland Licensing standards.

I fully believe HB 628 will both strengthen the marriage and family therapy profession in Maryland and help address shortages of quality mental health clinicians for residents of Maryland. I appreciate your attention and support to this promising legislation.

Sincerely,
Alexandra Simione, LGMFT

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