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Carol Podgorski, PhD, MPH, LMFT

Immediate Past President, New York Association for Marriage & Family Therapy (NYAMFT)

Budget Testimony Regarding License Mental Health Professionals Practice Exemption

Contained within Part Y of A.9507/S.7507 of the Executive Budget, is a proposal to permanently clarify the tasks and activities master-level licensed professionals, master-level professionals training to obtain a license and other employees in community and state-operated settings can perform and assist others to perform. It will severely curtail access to mental health services if left as is.

People, like the students taught at the **University of Rochester** and those receiving master's degrees from 27 other New York State colleges and universities with licensed mental health practitioner education programs leading to degrees in one of the four professions included in Article 163 of the State Education Law (Family Therapy, Mental Health Counseling, Psychoanalysis, and Creative Arts Therapy) including: **Syracuse University; Hofstra University; University of Buffalo; Yeshiva University; Pace; St John's University; Alfred; SUNY New Paltz; St. John Fisher College; SUNY Brockport; SUNY Oswego; SUNY New Paltz; Adelphi; Hunter College; Marist College; John Jay; Canisius College; SUNY Albany; Baruch College; Mercy College; Manhattan College; LIU Brooklyn; College of New Rochelle; Iona College; Nyack College; and Medaille College**, will have far less access to the supervised training required to obtain New York State licensure which can help address the behavioral health care crisis facing our state.

I am associate professor of Psychiatry at the University of Rochester School of Medicine & Dentistry. I have a doctorate in medical sociology, a master's in public health, and a Master of Science in marriage and family therapy. The following are some of my job responsibilities:

- **Co-Director of the UR Family Therapy Training Program** where we have a COAMFTE-accredited MS program in MFT and we have an Advanced Certificate program in family therapy for mental health professionals from other disciplines who wish to obtain family therapy training;
- **Director, Finger Lakes Center of Excellence for Alzheimer's Disease** (funded by NYS Department of Health to increase access to dementia diagnoses in a 10-county region. The Center includes a hospital-based memory disorders clinic in an academic setting, and a robust educational program to train physicians and allied health professionals in diagnosis and treatment of dementias;
- **Clinic Director, UR Medicine's Memory Care Program (MCP)**, an Article 28 clinic that provides 3,000 visits per year and serves patients from 41 counties as well as states contiguous to NYS. Responsible for model of care, oversight of model of care, staffing, workflows, reporting, evaluations;



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- **Faculty Therapist, UR Mental Health and Wellness' Family Therapy Services** (Article 31, adult ambulatory clinic). Provide individual, couple, and family therapy using evidence-based psychotherapy approaches, including family therapy; responsibilities include intake assessments, treatment plans, collaboration with psychopharmacology providers and primary care physicians, and coordination of care with collateral providers and supports.
- **Approved Supervisor at Family Therapy Services.** Supervise MFT students at this Article 31 clinic. Approved supervisor is a credential earned through the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. It is a two- year process that involves extensive supervision of supervision;
- **Faculty Therapist, UR Medicine Memory Care Program (MCP).** Provide medical family therapy in this Article 28 facility to patients with cognitive impairment as well as their spouses, caregivers, and other family members. Medical providers (physicians) and social workers in the MCP refer patients and family members to me. This service is intended to support the physician's plan of care by strengthening support and knowledge for the caregivers, reducing patient and/or caregiver symptoms of depression and anxiety, or caregiver stress. Family therapy is often used to reduce family conflict to improve patient and caregiver outcomes, to reduce risk of violence or other safety considerations, and to strengthen the family system to prevent unnecessary hospitalizations and ED visits; and
- **Director, Family Consultation Services at Monroe Community Hospital, an Article 28 hospital-based long-term care facility.** This is a training site for UR MFT students who are interested in medical family therapy and/or working with populations across the life cycle. I direct the site and provide supervision to one supervisor-in-training, and to 3 MFT trainees

If the Executive's current budget proposal is enacted, I will be unable to perform many of these duties to their fullest, the way I can now. For that reason, **the New York Association for Marriage & Family Therapy has joined with an unprecedented coalition of 14 mental health and addiction services organizations statewide that have come together to address this critical issue.**

When the practice exemption was extended another two years in 2016, the organizations representing the mental health professionals licensed under Article 163 of the Education Law – including NYAMFT – were told we would spend the intervening two years as part of a work group tasked with addressing many of the workforce issues impacted by the practice exemption. That has not occurred. Therefore, I am requesting we work together to ensure the behavioral health workforce crisis is addressed and those with master's degrees from some of the finest higher education institutions in the state can receive readily the full scope of supervised training they require for New York State licensure.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue.