

TNAMFT Legislation Talking Points

TNAMFT is the legislative advocate for LMFTs in Tennessee. Continued membership ensures your interest is represented in the halls of the legislature and at the Capitol. On TNAMFT Day on the Hill you will be talking with lawmakers about three bills of importance in today's mental health public policy arena- Student Loan Forgiveness, Suicide Training and LMFTs regulatory board.

STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS- SB771 (Yarbro)/HB879 (Dixie) TNAMFT Legislation

One of the top issues discussed during the recent elections was opioid abuse and how it is ravaging lives in our state. It

In response, TNAMFT came forward to key state lawmakers with a proposal to expand the state's current medical health provider student loan forgiveness program to include mental health providers in an effort to join the fight against the opioid addiction epidemic. We discovered during our meetings that our state's Department of Health was about to engage such a program. That was good to hear, however, **the new program did not include licensed marriage and family therapists.**

After discovering LMFTs were left out, we had several meetings with lawmakers and Department of Health representatives negotiating for inclusion. DOH staff would not commit to placing LMFTs in the program without a needs assessment. The process begins this spring and Robbie Hutchens will serve as liaison with DOH on behalf of TNAMFT.

While we are hopeful the assessment outcome will show a need for LMFTs to participate, we are not convinced that the methods being used necessarily fall in our favor. So, we have filed legislation to use in the event the outcome does not go our way. SB771/HB879 will be used if necessary, to change the policy insuring LMFTs can take part in the opioid mental health provider loan forgiveness program.

YOUR MESSAGE TO LAWMAKERS- LMFTs can and should play a role in helping address our state's opioid crisis. We want to participate in this fight and deserve the opportunity to tap into the state's Student Loan Forgiveness Program like other mental health providers.

COMMITTEES

This bill has not been assigned to committees at this time.

SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING- SB204 (Briggs)/SB36 (Whitson)

Last year the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network promoted a bill requiring LMFTs and other mental health professionals to take a course in suicide prevention every five years. This odd year requirement was not compatible with the two-year license renewal cycle. To have both aligned, a bill has been introduced to change the suicide prevention course requirement to every four years.

YOUR MESSAGE TO LAWMAKERS- Explain why the bill is needed and ask the lawmaker to vote yes on the bill.

COMMITTEES

Senate Health and Welfare Committee

House Facilities, Licensure and Regulations Subcommittee

TNAMFT Legislation Talking Points

BOARD FOR LICENSED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS, LICENSED MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS & CLINICAL PASTORAL THERAPISTS- SB98 (Roberts)/HB430 (Martin)

Every organized entity serving state government is created by law and must have a start and end date. This applies to departments, commissions and boards like TennCare, Department of Health, or Commission on Children and Youth. Every 3-7 years a bill is filed to extend the entities' end dates. This process is called "sunsetting"

This year a bill has been introduced to extend the sunset for LMFT's licensing board. Why is this Board and this bill very important for you? Because without the bill, the Board would cease to exist- literally. The Board would no longer be in state law. No funds or staff. And, without the board you will no license.

TNAMFT takes this bill seriously. Sunset bills have been held hostage many times to make a point to a particular board or a profession. In representing the interests of LMFTs, TNAMFT has taken a strong public stance against some public policy issues important to our profession. We have a healthy respect concerning legislation continuing the existence of our regulatory board and take nothing for granted!

It is important for you to tell lawmakers to support the extension of our licensing board. The bill is on Senate Government Operations calendar Wednesday!

YOUR MESSAGE TO LAWMAKERS- Vote yes to extend the sunset of the Board for Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Professional Marriage and Family Therapists and Licensed Clinical Pastoral Counselors.

COMMITTEES

Senate Government Operations Committee, Wednesday, February 13th, 9:30 AM

Members: K. Roberts (R); E. Jackson (R); J. Bowling (R); R. Kurita (I); K. Yager (R); M. Pody (R); B. Massey (R); S. Kyle (D); R. Crowe (R); M. Bell

House Government Operations Committee