



May 21, 2021

Dear Members of the House Education Committee and the House Human Services Committee:

The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) thanks you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the issue of mental health in schools. AAMFT represents the professional interests of over 62,000 Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) in the United States, including Pennsylvania. Our Pennsylvania-based network, the Pennsylvania Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, advocates on behalf of our profession in Pennsylvania. Both AAMFT and PAMFT strongly believe that conversations around mental health in schools should include all qualified mental health providers, including marriage and family therapists.

Marriage and family therapists are uniquely suited to work within school systems. MFTs are trained to work with individuals, with specialized training to work with families and groups. The systemic perspective of the MFT prepares them to work with students while considering the larger systems at play such as families, social systems, and the school system as a whole. In fact, AAMFT has a network made up of MFTs working in school systems and those interested in working in school systems.

The pandemic has made it even more important to utilize all mental health professionals available. Barriers to care, such as a lack of mental health professionals, will only prolong the COVID-19 mental health crisis. By including all mental health professionals as eligible for any specialized credential for a school mental health provider, students will have a better ability to seek treatment.

We thank you for your commitment to the mental health of students in Pennsylvania. If you, or other staff members would like to request further information from AAMFT or continue this discussion, please contact me at kdavenport@aamft.org or (703) 822-7237. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Keiko Davenport
Government Affairs Manager
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy