



April 11, 2018

Sunset Advisory Commission  
P.O. Box 13066  
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Chair Birdwell, Vice Chair Paddie, and Members of the Texas Sunset Commission;

The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) thanks you for the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments on the second sunset review of the Texas State Board of Examiners of Marriage and Family Therapists (TSBEMFT). AAMFT is the professional association for the field of marriage and family therapy and represents the interests of 62,000 Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs), including the over 3,500 MFTs and associate MFTs licensed in Texas. AAMFT is affiliated with the Texas Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, AAMFT's affiliate that represents the interests of MFTs in Texas. AAMFT supports the creation of the Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council (BHEC), and supports the structure of the BHEC as modeled after HB 2898/SB 311 during the 85<sup>th</sup> Regular Session.

Marriage and Family Therapy is a distinguished and distinctive mental health discipline that evolved over decades of interdisciplinary research and treatment innovation. Marriage and Family Therapy is considered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration as one of the five core mental health professions alongside psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, clinical social workers, and psychiatric nurse specialists. The State of Texas has recognized the importance and value of marriage and family therapy when the Legislature established the license in 1991 and throughout its continued regulation for nearly 25 years.

AAMFT believes that the BHEC, consisting of the Texas State Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors, Texas State Board of Social Work Examiners, TSBEMFT, the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists, as well as advisory committees that oversee sex offender treatment providers and chemical dependency counselors provides the most cost-effective solution and would allow Texas to stand as an innovative leader in integrated behavioral health. Such a behavioral council was unanimously recommended by the members of the 2016-2017 Review Cycle of the 85<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session.

The BHEC, as fashioned in HB 2898/SB 311, would consist of 9 members with 2 members (one public, one professional) chosen by the existing licensure boards and one additional public member appointed by the Governor. This structure would also address immunity from antitrust concerns as the BHEC would have explicit authority to review any rule promulgated by an independent licensure board to ensure that the proposed rule is consistent with the statute, is not anti-competitive, does not result in a restraint of trade, or cause monopoly concerns. AAMFT supports the inclusion of language that would fortify the BHEC from antitrust concerns, such as

a prohibition on the appointment of individuals licensed as a practitioner of the healing arts to serve as public members of the BHEC.

Establishing the BHEC as the umbrella agency for mental health professionals would leverage the administrative benefits of consolidation while also preserving the profession expertise of each independent board. The BHEC structure as proposed in HB 2898/SB 311 allows the state of Texas to preserve peer to peer review, and maintain a rigorous practice standard for practitioners while protecting the public.

AAMFT thanks the Sunset Advisory Commission and its staff for all your work in reviewing TSBEMFT and for the opportunity to provide these stakeholder comments. AAMFT stands ready to assist the commission during its sunset review process. Please feel free to contact me at [levans@aamft.org](mailto:levans@aamft.org) if you have any questions or if you need additional information regarding the MFT profession.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Laura A. Evans". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Laura" being the most prominent part.

Laura A. Evans  
State Government Affairs Manager  
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy