

 **P.O Box 444, Brookville, PA 15825 pacounselingassociation@gmail.com**

March 8, 2018

The Honorable

Harrisburg, PA 17120-

Dear Representative:

The Pennsylvania Counseling Association (PCA) fully supports and endorses Senate Bill 530, Printers Number 1166. SB 530 will protect the delivery of clinical mental health services that are performed by Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs), Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFTs) and Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs) in the Commonwealth by permitting LMFTs, LCSWs and LPCs to diagnose solely within their statutorily defined scope of practice and by protecting the rights of licensed LPCs, LMFTs and LCSWs to practice independently.

Currently, 50 states and the District of Columbia recognize and license Professional Counselors, Marriage and Family Therapists and Clinical Social Workers as independent mental health providers. SB530 ensures continued uniformity in the Commonwealth as states update their licensing statutes to better reflect the use of LPCs, LMFTs and LCSWs professional skills in the delivery of mental, emotional, and behavioral healthcare services.

Pennsylvania is currently one of several states that permit LPCs, LMFTS and LCSWs to diagnose in practice even though their statutorily defined scope of practice does not use the term “diagnosis”. SB 530 will codify a definition of diagnosis to ensure that LPCs, LMFTs and LCSWs can continue to treat mental, emotional and behavioral health clients with the highest ethical standards under current law. Codifying the long-established authority to diagnose protects LPCs, LMFTs and LCSWs ability to accurately evaluate and effectively treat the thousands of Pennsylvanians that depend on them for guidance, counseling, and healing. The bill also protects the right of sole practitioners of licensed marriage and family therapy, licensed clinical social workers and licensed professional counselors to treat mental, emotional and behavioral health clients in private practice settings.

PCA urges the members of the House Professional Licensure Committee to vote favorably on this important legislation. Voting YES on SB 530 PN 1166, ensures the continued accessibility of LPCs, LMFTs and LCSWs to provide crucial mental, emotional, and behavioral health services at a time when the Commonwealth is encountering a crises-level lack of mental and behavioral healthcare providers.

Sincerely,



Linda Thompson, LPC, LMFT

President, PCA