

(S. B. 837)

(No. 71)

(Approved March 29, 2006)

AN ACT

To amend Section 17 of Act No. 147 of August 9, 2002, known as the Act to Regulate the Practice of Professional Counselors in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico,” in order to extend the transitional clause and the granting of licenses.

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

The growing offer of Counselors’ services in Puerto Rico made it necessary to approve the Act to Regulate the Practice of Professional Counselors in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The objective of this legislative piece is to guarantee that the citizenry is properly benefited from the practice of a profession which constitutes such a great social service. Counselors graduated between 2000 and 2002 were affected by the approval of Act No. 147 of August 9, 2002. Those who have less than two years of experience in the Professional Counselors field shall be affected with the application of the Transitional Clause, Section 17 of the Act.

The adoption of this Act hindered the Counselors graduated between 2000 and 2002 to express their concern on the matter until the request for the amendment of the Act. For this reason, Section 17, which establishes the Transitional Clause shall be drafted in such manner that those Counselors who graduated before the drafting of the law and have the necessary experience may benefit therefrom. In this manner, any Counselor who graduated before the approval of Act No. 147 of August 9, 2002 and

accredits experience as Counselor in a private, public, quasipublic company shall be exempted from the requirements contained in subsections (g) and (h) of Section 8 (take the written examination and complete 500 hours of practice supervised by a Certified Mentor) as well as those who currently benefit from Section 17 of the Act.

At present, there are counselors that graduated before the approval of the Act who have received informative letters notifying them of a term to obtain the provisional license required by Act No. 147 of August 9, 2002. This situation threatens the jobs of these counselors who depend on them to support their families, since it is their only source of income. For all of the above, it is the duty of this Legislature to do justice to these professionals and it deems it necessary to approve this measure in order to extend the terms of the Transitional Clause.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF PUERTO RICO:

Section 1.- Section 17 of Act No. 147 of August 9, 2002, is hereby amended, to read as follows:

“Section 17.- Transitional Clause

During the first twenty-four (24) months after its constitution, the Board may grant a Professional Counseling license to any person who requests it, if he/she meets the provisions of subsection (a) thru (f) of Section 8 of this Act, and in addition, provides evidence of having practiced his/her profession as Counselor before December 31, 2005. The Board shall establish by regulations the documents and authentic evidence that shall be presented by the applicants in order to verify their practice in the profession of counseling for the established term. The Board shall not require a written examination these applicants nor the completion of five (500) hundred hours of practice supervised by a Certified Mentor.”

Section 2.- Within a term of sixty (60) days, the Board shall approve those amendments corresponding to the Regulation in effect, thus tempering it to the contents of this Act, extending the protection herein provided to the Counselors who comply with the requirements of the Act.

Section 3.- This Act shall take effect immediately after its approval and shall apply to every Counselor who, after the approval of Act No. 147 of August 9, 2002, meets all the requirements to obtain the license. To avail him/herself of the benefits herein established, any person who requests the Professional Counselor License shall complete their application within a period not to exceed one (1) year after the effective date of this Act.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify to the Secretary of State that the following Act No. 71 (S.B. 837) of the 3rd Session of the 15th Legislature of Puerto Rico:

AN ACT to amend Section 17 of Act No. 147 of August 9, 2002, known as the Act to Regulate the Practice of Professional Counselors in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico,” in order to extend the transitional clause and the granting of licenses,

has been translated from Spanish to English and that the English version is correct.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, today 25th of October of 2006.

Francisco J. Domenech
Director