



# Ohio Board of Psychology

Testimony on the FY20-21 Biennial Operating Budget  
House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education  
Representatives Cupp and Patterson, Co-Chairs

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Executive Director  
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Co-Chairmen Cupp and Patterson and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am Dr. Ronald Ross, Executive Director of the State Board of Psychology. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and thanks also to OMB Budget Analyst Nick Strahan and LSC Analyst Ryan Sherrock for their work on this request and the Redbook. The executive recommendation totals operating funds of \$665,000 for FY20 and \$696,000 for FY21, estimates of minimal funding to allow the Psychology Board to meet its biennial obligations to enforce ORC 4732 (psychologists and school psychologists) and ORC 4783 (Certified Ohio Behavior Analysts). This funding is projected to allow the Psychology Board to meet its biennial obligations, barring an unforeseen number of disciplinary hearings.

## The State Board of Psychology's Role in Ohio

Since 1972, the Psychology Board has provided protections to the public through examinations, licensing, monitoring of continuing education, monitoring of unlicensed practice (both supervised practice of extenders and illegal practice), and investigating complaints and maintaining accountability among Ohio's psychologists. In addition, in 2014 the Psychology Board became responsible for regulating the practice of applied behavior analysis with the enactment of ORC 4783 and the promulgation of rules in OAC 4783. Therefore, the Psychology Board enforces two chapters of law and rules, and we absorbed the regulation of ORC 4783 without an increase in staffing or funding.

The Psychology Board's 4,200 licensees are at the forefront of the healthcare system in Ohio, being found in private practices, hospitals, medical schools, autism treatment centers, mental health clinics, Veteran's Affairs medical centers, college counseling centers, schools, industries, courts, and

prisons. Each licensee must restrict one's practice to those areas in which he or she is competent, and must strive to do no harm. The deeply human interactions that take place in a psychologist's practice typically reflect a complicated combination of hope and despair. The Psychology Board has the responsibility for regulating behavior that typically occurs when patients are highly vulnerable in terms of their emotional condition, self-concept, and relationships. Ohio's consumers of psychological services expect from their psychologists and behavior analysts competence, compassion, trust, confidentiality, and a clearly defined role. The Psychology Board exists to ensure that Ohioans get these things.

The Psychology Board's greatest responsibility is to protect the well-being and safety of Ohioans who receive or seek psychological or applied behavior analysis services, which are by definition frequently fraught with mixed emotions, ambiguities, and complexities. The Board fields complaints requiring study and investigation by trained investigators and members of the Board and occasional subject matter expert witnesses. For example, as psychologists continue to offer services to litigants and domestic relations courts, the Board regularly receives complaints relative to negligence, competence, and conflicts of interest allegations. These cases are typically highly emotional and convoluted and lodged by individuals with a keen eye on the Board's response to their distress. In addition, the Board continues to receive complaints regarding billing fraud, confidentiality violations, and sexual boundary violations, including sexual activity with patients. Our caseload has been holding steady at around 40 open investigations over the past biennium.

### Operational Overview

- Like most occupational regulatory boards, the Psychology board does not receive General Revenue Funds and we remain self-supporting through fees.
- Along with approximately 35 other boards and commissions, the Psychology Board receives consolidated administrative, fiscal, and HR support from the Central Services Agency, a division of DAS, in the Riffe Center. We receive shared IT services from the Office of Information Technology.
- The Board's redesigned website fosters numerous efficiencies, by providing the public, applicants, and licensees access to information and materials, including: license applications and instructions; meeting notices and minutes; laws and rules; license verification; educational practice alerts; and disciplinary action documents.
- We do business from a customer service model. Those emailing or calling the Board almost always need something that we have, so we answer our phones in person and we are

immediately responsive to licensees and the public. When you call the Psychology Board office, you get a personable staff member who knows the laws and rules and will take the time to address your concerns or find somebody in the office who can.

- Since 2006, the State Board of Psychology has reduced its office staff from seven (7) FTE to five (5) FTE, and we are fortunate to have cohesion, camaraderie, and cross-training that allows us to meet or exceed customer expectations.

#### Challenges for the 2020-21 Fiscal Biennium

- Contractual Payroll Increases. This budget request is submitted in the context of payroll projections being 12% higher for FY20 over FY18 and 10% higher for FY21 over FY19. This is the primary challenge when considering the steady operational costs to run the Board and meet statutory obligations.
- eLicense Ohio 3.0 Cost Share. Based on data from DAS, the Psychology Board's annual share of the eLicense database will be approximately \$8,000 for each FY20 and FY21.
- Credit Card Processing Fees. Projected fees related to eLicense credit card transactions are predictable and steady, estimated at \$1,300 for FY20 and \$17,300 for FY21. This is a basic cost of doing business within the eLicense Ohio system.
- Funding to Pay for Biennial Audit. This submission also includes a request to ensure that the Board is sufficiently funded to pay biennial invoices totaling \$12,000 from the Auditor of State, for our audit in FY20 and FY21.

The Board believes that this request reflects a responsible attempt to meet our basic responsibilities to the public, maintain our staffing level, and meet costs of conducting business amid some increases in projected spending on DAS charges and employee payroll and benefits.

Please accept my gratitude for your consideration, and I'd be happy to answer questions.