



Ohio Board of Psychology

Written Testimony in Support of SB2
Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact (PSYPACT)
House Criminal Justice
March 11, 2021

Rep. Jeff LaRe, Chair
Rep. Douglas Swearingen, Vice Chair
Rep. David Leland, Ranking Member

Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony on behalf of the State Board of Psychology. We request your support of SB2, which would result in Ohio entering the interstate compact for the practice of psychology by distance communications. Telepsychology has evolved into a mental health practice specialty that fosters increased access to psychological care and new practice opportunities for Ohio's psychologists. The Psychology Board voted to endorse the compact in 2016 after determining that it preserves the Board's ability to exercise its legitimate state interest in protecting public health and safety.

The purpose of PSYPACT is to facilitate the interstate practice of telepsychology and the temporary in-person, face-to-face practice of psychology with the goal of improving access to mental health services in a manner that preserves the regulatory authority of each member state to protect public health and safety. PSYPACT was created to provide a clear, agreed-upon regulatory structure for the practice of telepsychology and temporary in-person, face-to-face practice. Advantages to consumers include increased access to general care and specialty care and avenues for complaints and accountability. PSYPACT requires that a psychologist have an doctoral degree from an accredited psychology training program and be licensed in their home state. It authorizes qualified psychologists to practice telepsychology in a receiving state or conduct temporary in-person, face-to-face practice in a distant state. This allows the home state to continue to regulate the license while allowing receiving states to know who is eligible to practice in their state without requiring psychologists to obtain and maintain a license in every PSYPACT state.

My primary intent is to assure the committee that we know what we're getting into, and we are prepared to implement the compact in Ohio. As a compact governed by a commission comprised of representatives of compact member boards, this is an easy lift for our board. There is no need for additional staffing or financial resources to fully participate as a compact state. The costs to any participating board are capped at \$6,000 annually, a level of participation that we can absorb without attaching an appropriation to this bill. Ohio psychologists are already authorized to provide telepsychology services to Ohioans under our current law and rules, and SB258 would reduce access-to-care barriers while retaining the Psychology Board's authority to limit or stop incompetent and dangerous practices by psychologists licensed in other states.

This compact legislation did not quite make it to the finish line in the 133rd General Assembly after passing the House and Senate. Even before the COVID-19 crisis led to stay-at-home orders and a sudden disruption of most in-person psychological services, PSYPACT was the proverbial “no-brainer,” and is even more so now. As the practice of psychology via distance communications becomes a standard expectation of many patients, even beyond the COVID-19 crisis, and competence and comfort with telepsychology grows among psychologists, PSYPACT will provide citizens with expanded access to care while providing Ohio’s psychologists with opportunities to expand practice into PSYPACT-member states. Please support SB2. Interstate telepsychology regulation is moving forward permanently, and PSYPACT is the vehicle.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronald Ross", written in a cursive style.

Ronald Ross, Ph.D., CPM
Executive Director

(614) 466-1085
psy.dir@psy.ohio.gov