



Ohio Board of Psychology

Testimony on the FY22-23 Biennial Operating Budget (HB110)
Senate Health Committee
Senator Stephen Huffman, Chair

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Executive Director
April 22, 2021

Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and Members of the Committee:

I am Dr. Ron Ross, Executive Director of the State Board of Psychology. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. 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 \$679,000 for FY22 and \$696,000 for FY23, the projected 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).

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 conducting investigations and issuing disciplinary actions to maintain accountability among Board license holders. 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 4,400 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 30 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.
- 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 2022-23 Fiscal Biennium

- **Increases in Payroll and Benefits.** This budget request is submitted in the context of payroll projections being 6% higher for FY22 over FY20 Actual and 7.5% higher for FY23 over FY20 Actual. This is the primary challenge when considering the steady operational costs to run the Board and meet standard obligations.
- **FY19 eLicense Ohio 3.0 Billing.** Based on data from DAS, the Psychology Board's annual share of the eLicense database will be approximately 11,000 for FY22 and \$12,000 for FY23. These are significant increases compared to our FY20 Actual of \$6,387.
- **Funding to Pay for Credit Card Processing Fees (especially FY23 license renewal).** Projected fees related to eLicense credit card transactions are predictable and steady, estimated at \$1,300 for FY22 and \$17,300 for FY23. This is a basic cost of doing business and providing for credit card payments for all Board services through eLicense Ohio.
- **Funding to Pay for Biennial Audit.** This submission also includes a request to cover funding to ensure that the Board is sufficiently funded to pay invoices from the Auditor of State, for our audit in FY22 and FY23. The audit costs around \$12,000.

The Board believes that this request reflects a responsible attempt to meet our 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.

Thank you for your consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions.