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**Senate Workforce & Higher Education Committee  
Nov. 30, 2022**

**Testimony on HB 509**

**Rachel Chilton, Executive Director, Ohio School Psychologists Association**

Chairman Johnson and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 509, legislation to make regulatory changes to several Ohio board licenses. Joining me today are Ron Ross, Executive Director of the State Board of Psychology, and Doug Cole, President of the State Board of Psychology and a school psychologist. Collectively we will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

The Ohio School Psychologists Association, which represents more than 700 school psychologists in Ohio, has serious concerns about the provision in the bill pertaining to the private practice license for school psychologists, which is issued by the State Board of Psychology.

Ohio has been experiencing a shortage of school psychologists for a number of years and our training programs simply cannot produce new graduates fast enough to fill this shortfall. Most school psychologists are employed in a school setting and are required to hold a license issued by the Ohio Department of Education. However, we also have 201 school psychologists who have sought the advanced step of obtaining a private practice license, which is overseen by the State Board of Psychology.

The occupational licensing report released earlier this month - which has been incorporated into HB 509 - recommends eliminating that private practice license and not only taking away the livelihood of those 201 school psychologists but further deepening the shortage in the state. Eliminating this line of work also eradicates prospective employment opportunities not just for Ohioans but for school psychologists from other states looking to relocate here thus making Ohio less business friendly. We urge you to retain the private practice license and its current continuing education structure.

It will not be news to you that the youth mental health crisis in this state is pervasive. At the same time Ohio does not have enough mental and behavioral health providers and school psychologists are one such provider. The shortage of school psychologists is most acute in the rural areas of our state. The legislation would eliminate an avenue of service to children available through private practice school psychologists, thus providing even fewer options to meet the needs of children and adolescents.

The occupational licensing report erroneously asserts that the scope of practice of the ODE school psych and the private practice one is the same; however, there is a crucial difference: private practice school psychs are the only ones able to provide services outside of a school. As such the services provided often go beyond what happens in schools. Private practice school psychs can make mental health diagnoses related to learning issues; whereas, school-based psychs make educational diagnoses only. These private practice license holders can work in hospitals, in group homes, in non-profit agencies that provide behavioral health services, or in



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private offices to help children overcome the behavioral, mental and emotional hurdles to succeeding academically.

School psychologists in private practice are well trained in special education evaluation processes, understanding the assessments needed to determine whether a student may have a disability. Under Federal and Ohio law parents can seek an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) if they disagree with the school district's evaluation. School psychologists who hold the private practice license are the best suited to provide these. Eliminating this license will remove them from providing this valuable service to parents and their children.

Some private companies also hire school psychologists with the private practice license and place them in charter and private schools, so removal of the license would restrict services to those settings.

School psychs operating in private practice are small business owners. The language in HB 509 will shutter these businesses and prevent any future practices from forming - be they from Ohio school psychologists or those wanting to move here. Elimination of this license also eliminates the ability of these small businesses to operate or expand.

The two school psych licenses should not be viewed as an either/or scenario but rather an and/or one. School psychologists may hold one or both licenses at a time. The only thing to note is that all school psychs start with the ODE license and can only obtain the private one after four years of experience and passing a rigorous licensing exam focusing on ethical practices. If the licenses were truly duplicative, why would our practitioners hold both licenses at once?

We have submitted an amendment to the chairman's office seeking to restore current law for this license. We have, however, left in the sub bill's language to add a certified behavior analyst to the State Board of Psychology and to remove the school psychology examination committee as we have no objections to those two changes. We hope we can count on your support for this amendment.

Given the state of mental health and academic achievement in Ohio and the nation, now is not the time to alter the infrastructure of our professionals operating in this arena and potentially derail a system that is working. Please preserve licensure flexibility and options to ensure Ohio's children and their families continue to be served by properly qualified and skilled school psychologists. Thank you for your consideration today.