



Ohio Board of Psychology

Sub. HB509 Testimony
Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Senator Terry A. Johnson, Chair

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Executive Director
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Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Martin, and Members of the Committee:

I am Ron Ross, Executive Director of the State Board of Psychology. Thank you for your time today. Since 1972, the Psychology Board has provided public health and safety protections through examinations, licensing, monitoring of continuing education, monitoring of unlicensed practice, and conducting investigations and issuing disciplinary actions to maintain accountability among Board license holders and license applicants. The Board issues and regulates three licenses—psychologist, school psychologist for practice outside of school settings, and Certified Ohio Behavior Analysts. Its president, serving his second term, is Dr. Douglas Cole, a Board-licensed school psychologist.

School psychology is a masters-level subspecialty in the field of psychology concerned with educationally-related learning problems and the their psychological, emotional and behavioral aspects. I am here today to provide some clarification about the practice of school psychology and what would happen if the State Board of Psychology school psychologist license is eliminated as proposed in Sub. HB509. The proposal to eliminate license issued by the Psychology Board is based at least in part on an assertion that the license is redundant with the ODE license. That is inaccurate. The roles of these two practitioners are not the same.

ODE-licensed school psychologists provide school-based services limited to their scope of employment by a school district or private school. They work on teams and, through evaluations and consultation, they call attention to academic-learning conditions that are unique to the school setting. They are not permitted to work outside of school settings in the community or to assign mental health diagnoses. They are integral to what happens inside of Ohio's schools.

On the other hand, Psychology Board-licensed school psychologists are licensed to work outside of school settings in organizations and private practices. Board-licensed school psychologists provide counseling, conduct evaluations, and render diagnoses which are essential to multidisciplinary assessment and treatment. Board-licensed school psychologists also work with adults with learning problems and the emotional and behavioral aspects of those problems, including college students. This group of 200 professionals has been vetted by the Psychology Board and provide a small but critical workforce that can be called upon by parents, physicians, allied mental health professionals, and others to identify and remediate learning problems and the psychological aspects of those issues.

Please consider some foreseeable consequences if this license is eliminated:

- There are many Board-licensed school psychologists currently making a living through this license. Eliminating their licenses would eliminate jobs.
- In this time of increasing need and demand for mental health services (including school psychologist services), this action would reduce access to services.
- There is already a shortage of school psychologists in Ohio and this will exacerbate the problem. Further, no school psychologists from other states will move here to practice privately. It would eliminate employment opportunities, not expand them.
- Psychology Board-licensed school psychologists are also authorized to provide training supervision for psychology trainees, and eliminating their licenses would further narrow the availability of appropriate professional training experiences.

Most psychologists are not trained in the subspecialty of school psychology, so eliminating this license would tear a small hole in the mental health service system by interrupting ongoing services and closing doors to referrals from people like physicians and parents seeking diagnostic clarification and interventions outside of the school.

It is hard to find any Ohioan who would stand to benefit from the elimination of this license because it would reduce the mental health workforce and reduce access to services.

Finally, the Psychology Board supports two parts of Sub. HB509. First, the Board supports the addition of a Certified Ohio Behavior Analyst to the Board. Second, we support elimination of the School Psychology Examination Committee, which has been unnecessary since around 2010, when the Board began to use the exact same jurisprudence examination for school psychologist applicants as is used for psychologist applicants. Prior to that time, a different examination was used and overseen by this outdated committee. We requested these legislative changes as part of the Sunset review process.

The Psychology Board supports an amendment to Sub. HB509 submitted by the Ohio School Psychologist Association to the Chair to retain the school psychologist license. We are hopeful that the school psychologists authorized to practice by the State Board of Psychology will be allowed to continue to provide services and that Ohioans can continue to seek specialty services from them long into the future. We need more school psychologists inside and outside of school settings, not fewer.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today, and I would be happy to answer any questions.