

## S.B. 258 PSYPACT Testimony

Dr. Mark Babula

March 4<sup>th</sup> 2020

Chairman Huffman, Co-Chair Hackett, Ranking Member Thomas, members of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid. My name is Mark Babula and I am a psychologist in Toledo, and a Member of the Communications and Technology Committee of the Ohio Psychological Association.

I am here today to ask you to support SB 258. As a member of the Ohio Psychological Association's Communications and Technology Committee, I have been following the development and progress of PSYPACT for several years. I believe this bill will help to address unmet needs and help the citizens of Ohio better adapt to changing technology.

Because I live close to the Michigan border, I chose to obtain licensure in both states. This allowed me to successfully continue treatment, through telepsychology, with a client who spends significant amounts of time in Michigan for work. I have also been able to use telepsychology with a student attending college in Ohio. I have had other clients, however, who moved out of state for work or school, and I have not been able to continue their treatment. Some clients may be able to begin treatment with a new psychologist. This can be difficult, however, for college students or people who commute for work, who spend time in various locations; it can be easier and more productive to have one consistent treatment provider. It can also be helpful for those relocating more permanently to be able to continue with a therapist through the transition, and potentially to continue treatment with the person from whom they have already been receiving treatment, rather than restarting with a new therapist.

Senate Bill 258 also creates opportunities for people with mobility issues, people in rural communities, and others who may have limited access to psychological treatment. It expands opportunities for clients with religious beliefs, cultural concerns, language barriers, or specialized mental health treatment needs to find a psychologist to meet their specific needs. It also could create increased opportunities for people with time constraints, either related to the time needed

to travel to a psychologist's office or lack of availability during normal business hours in their time zone, to be connected with a psychologist able to match their availability.

I see few risks or concerns with this compact, but I am aware of problems that could be remedied by it. I am aware of a therapist who was not a psychologist, but who can serve as an example. When one of her clients moved out of state, both agreed it was best to continue treatment, which they chose to do by phone. The therapist was not aware this was not allowed until I brought it up. The therapist expressed her belief that continuing treatment during and after the move was in the best interest of the client, which I generally agree with, but there was no realistic mechanism in place for that. Senate Bill 258, or PSYPACT, helps to prevent situations like this for psychologists. It creates a structured and legal means to continue the treatment in a way that also protects the client.

I am aware that, to practice telepsychology under PSYPACT, I need to maintain my licensure, obtain an E.Passport, and demonstrate continuing education relevant to using technology in psychology. I am aware disciplinary information will be shared on a common database between PSYPACT states. I know and welcome these, as I believe this compact would benefit psychologists and clients.

I believe passing this bill will benefit the people of Ohio. I ask you again for your support, thank you for your time, and am open to any questions.

Mark Babula, Psy.D.