

**Senate Workforce & Higher Education Committee**  
**Nov. 30, 2022**  
**Written Testimony on HB 509**  
**Allison Harrison**

Chairman Johnson and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on HB 509.

I am writing with an urgent plea to reconsider the modification being proposed to HB 509 regarding private practice licensure for school psychologists. I am a dually licensed school psychologist working in Stark County. I am licensed both by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and the Ohio Board of Psychology. With my ODE licensure, I am able to service public and private school districts with desperately needed psychological and mental health services. With Board licensure, I am able to work in private practice and serve the greater community through medical insurance and private pay, in addition to contract work for public schools. I am unable to provide the latter services without the Board license. There is a severe shortage of school psychologists, as well as clinicians in general who are trained in neuropsychological testing and diagnosis, across the nation. Ohio school psychologists are uniquely privileged to service our communities through the private practice setting as well as the public school setting. Just last week, the private practice I work for was informed that Akron Children's Hospital currently has a 6+ month waiting list for autism evaluations. Further, they appear to no longer be accepting any children under the age of 4 for an autism evaluation. This is because of the significant backlog of evaluation requests. School Psychologists in private practice settings are a phenomenal option for families to fulfill their diagnostic needs where our area hospitals are unable to. But unless we have the private board license, in ADDITION to the ODE license, we cannot provide these much needed supports to our local children and their families. Senator Johnson, if you support this bill to eliminate the private practice licensure for school psychologists, you will further deprive our Ohio citizens of much needed services related to diagnosis and treatment of developmental and learning disorders in children. Our practice's waiting list is pages long full of clients seeking my school psychological evaluation services because they cannot access these supports through their public schools. A private practice license is ESSENTIAL to our community.

Now that I've outlined how a school psychologist working in a private practice brings a unique perspective of school-based procedures and child development where other clinical psychologists tend to have less experience, I want to share with you my personal reasons for choosing this career path. I am a mom to two toddlers. Like many, my boys' births and development did not go perfectly smooth. I struggled with my own health following their births and experienced severe anxiety when I was away from them. At the time of their birth, I was working in public schools with only my ODE licensure. I was working long hours, well beyond that of the workday, to keep up with the state mandated timelines and the plethora of needs within our school buildings. I serviced three elementary schools and two private schools

while employed full-time in the schools. Every day was characterized by angry and worried parents, exhausted teachers, impatient administration, and struggling children. I loved my school community and my coworkers, but I needed to devote so much energy to my job that I was completely spent when I came home to my babies. My mental health was poor, as was my energy level. It impacted my boys' wellbeing that my energy was depleted by the time I finally came home to them. For me personally, operating as a school psychologist within a school setting was not a sustainable career for that point in my life. Knowing that Ohio School Psychologists are uniquely privileged to operate within private practices with Board licensure, I began to study the law. I left my job in public schools in June, took my oral exam in August and was hired by a local private practice. I began servicing the community in October 2021 and my schedule quickly filled. With this license, I now have the opportunity to not only serve a wider range of individuals from toddlers to adults, but I can provide these services through their medical insurance. This gives us the opportunity to explore diagnoses and cases where school districts have less latitude. For me personally, I have the opportunity to create my own schedule, work from home when needed, work directly with families at a deeper level than possible in schools, and consult with community providers. The fulfillment that I feel when I can impact a family in a positive way cannot be put into words. And the fact that I can make my own hours and experience less stress from state timelines and educational legislation means I am a happier, more present mother and wife. That is a gift that means more to me than any paycheck, certification, or award. I am not in a position in my life to return to public schools as an ODE licensed school psychologist. If you take away my board license, you will hurt my family and I. My three-year-old Lincoln, and my 1-year-old Nolan need the mom that they've come to know since October 2021. The mom that I am while employed as a privately licensed school psychologist is the mom my children need right now.

Do not take away my livelihood. Do not take away what I can do for my community. Do not pass HB 509.

Thank you for your time,

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School Psychologist