

TO: Ohio Senate: Workforce and Higher Education Committee  
FROM: Polly Taylor-Gerken, Toledo Ohio  
RE: HB 509  
DATE: November 28, 2022

My name is Polly Taylor-Gerken, 3445 River Rd. Toledo, Ohio. I hold both the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and Ohio Board of Psychology School Psychologist Licenses. I worked in Toledo Public Schools for 30 years and obtained my independent/private practice license from the Ohio Bd of Psy in 2006. I currently work in non-profit private practice in Sylvania Ohio where I serve as program director and oversee a grant to help prevent family violence. And, I am a member of the Toledo Board of Education.

It has come to my attention that language is contained in (or set to be added to) HB 509 that would eliminate the private practice license for School Psychologists issued by the Ohio Board of Psychology. The only reasoning I can uncover for why this action is proposed is the belief that the license is duplicative of the Ohio Department Of Education license.

Let me start by sharing with you why the independent licensure of school psychologists for private practice is important. Then I will attempt to clarify some differences between the two types of license.

At a time when the State is appropriately pushing out increased resources for mental health care, it seems imprudent to eliminate access to an entire group of mental health care providers in Ohio. Independently licensed school psychologists provide a wide variety of services to the community outside of the school setting. They assist with addressing barriers to success in educational endeavors – across the lifespan. School Psychologists in private practice help parents, children and adult learners by supporting social-emotional development, diagnose and treat learning disabilities and mental health problems that may interfere with school adjustment and learning.

The private practice where I work also serves as the counseling center for Lourdes University Students. I am sure you are aware of the increased need college students face in terms of their mental health care. Having a school psychologist on the team adds to the depth of services we can provide our students.

For community members seeking mental health services, our practice has a waiting list of 90 people, half of them are children. I know you are aware that across the state and country the waiting lists to obtain services for mental health care are enormous. School psychologists are mental health care providers who can help with this.

Please find a way to stop the elimination of the private practice license for school psychologists.

The Ohio Board of Psychology Licence and the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) license are not the same. School Psychologists are currently recognized mental health providers in schools and the community. Most who hold the independent/private practice license maintain both licenses.

The ODE license allows for practice in schools or for school districts **only**. An ODE license holder cannot practice independently, bill directly for services or through third party payers.

The Ohio Board of Psychology license can only be obtained after experience practicing in schools and with additional testing. As I mentioned: Those holding this license provide a wide variety of services to the community outside of the school setting. They assist with addressing barriers to success in educational endeavors – across the lifespan. School Psychologists in private practice help parents, children and adult learners by supporting social-emotional development, treating learning challenges and mental health problems that may interfere with school adjustment and learning.

Professional development requirements for the two are similar. However, the holder of the Ohio Bd of Psy license does not need to track or submit hours via independent professional development plans (IPDP) through independent professional development committees (IPDC) as do the ODE license holders to maintain their ODE license. They simply submit their current Bd. of Psy. license to the ODE at the appropriate time for renewal of that license.

In my opinion the professional development requirements and process for the independent license is much more straightforward than that required by ODE, though not less rigorous in content. In other words, the subset of school psychologists who hold both licenses do not go through the full processes of both licensing bodies for ongoing renewals. I mention this in case the originators of this proposal thought they were eliminating regulatory hurdles that don't actually exist.

Please understand that these two types of licenses are not duplicative. They serve some overlapping purposes, but having only an ODE license option in Ohio removes these services from being available outside the school setting. Most states have some version of a private practice license for school psychologist licenses in addition to their department of education licensure

I should add that in my role as a public school board member, I can assure you that school based mental health providers are also begging for increased availability of services outside of schools, as they struggle to meet the current needs of families and students.

I respectfully ask that you please find a way to block the elimination of the Ohio Board of Psychology School Psychologist license.

Respectfully Submitted,  
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