

Testimony in Support of HB503 Before the House Health Committee
Representative Lynn R. Wachtmann, Chair
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

My name is Ronald Ross. I am the Executive Director of the State Board of Psychology. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB503 and to request support for 2 amendments.

In early 2006, the Ohio Psychological Association (OPA) initiated discussions about aligning our licensing law with the realities of graduate education as it exists now, not as it existed when our licensure law was written approximately 36 years ago. The Psychology Board delegated study of the relevant issues to a workgroup of board members, Ohio psychologist educators, and other stakeholders. The workgroup's summary and recommendations were adopted by the full Board in June 2007, proposing an initial licensure structure consistent with that embodied in HB503.

- First, the Psychology Board supports HB503 because it does not reduce pre-licensure training requirements. **The current 2-year requirement is retained**, while allowing doctoral programs and psychologists-in-training flexibility to have the training completed before the doctorate is conferred. Current law requires 1 year of supervised experience after the award of the doctorate, regardless of the amount and quality of pre-doctoral training. The requirement for this "post-doc" year has been in the Board's law since it was enacted in 1972, when it was intended to serve as a public safeguard to ensure that Ohio psychologists had at least 2 years of pre-licensure experience. The past 36 years have seen the development of accreditation standards and the maturation of education and training of professional psychologists. Today many psychologists-in-training already have well over two years of supervised experience by the time the pre-doctoral internship is completed and the doctorate conferred. By recognizing this reality, the one-size-fits-all mandatory "post-doc" year is no longer appropriate as a requirement for the initial psychologist license.
- Second, the Psychology Board supports HB503 because quality education and training can be fostered by requiring Ohio's psychologists to come from accredited programs (the APA, the National Register/Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards Designation Committee and the Canadian Psychological Association are listed in the version before the committee and I will request an addition to this list in a moment). Ohio is among only 4 or 5 states in the country with no program accreditation requirements for psychologist licensure.

Therefore, HB503 would bring Ohio up to speed by **assuring that its psychologists come from programs that meet national standards**. Overall, HB503 would set minimum standards on the education of Ohio's next generation of psychologists, while recognizing that 2 years of quality training can be completed without the inflexible post-doc requirement.

- Third, the grandfathering provision in HB503 ensures that any student enrolled in a non-accredited doctoral program within 60 days of the effective date of this bill would have 8 years to complete the degree and retain license eligibility. In addition, the Board would write rules to define "accreditation" in a way that recognizes any student from any program that receives accreditation within 3 years after the degree is conferred. It would be the case, then, that programs would have 3-4 years to get accreditation so that none of its future graduates fall through any cracks. Therefore, this bill provides **important safeguards** to students, prospective students, and academic programs.
- Finally, your support is requested for what I understand to be **2 pending amendments** to HB503. First, please consider placing the pre-doctoral internship in the bill as a requirement. **Placing a required pre-doctoral internship in the bill is critical** because the intent of HB503 is to pair a required pre-doctoral internship with a second year of training that may occur either before or after the internship year. I should have caught this omission while the bill was being drafted, but I did not. This amendment is especially critical so that our rules committee and stakeholders can get updated administrative rules promulgated without unnecessary confusion and conflict relative to **statutory intent**. Second, an anticipated amendment would add to the list of accrediting bodies the **National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)**, which has a nationally recognized accreditation process for doctoral programs in school psychology. The omission of NASP as a recognized accrediting authority was not intentional, and adding NASP by amendment would be consistent with the Board's concept of requiring accredited degrees. The 2 affected Ohio programs are the University of Cincinnati and Ohio State, and I received assurance that those doctoral programs would support an amended bill that recognizes graduates of NASP-accredited programs.

In 2007, the states of Utah and Washington changed their psychology laws to allow for a flexible training model like that in HB503. I would speculate that over the next 5-10 years other states will follow, and Ohio will be viewed as a model for the enactment of licensure laws which correspond in a common sense way to the realities of contemporary graduate education and training in professional psychology. I therefore ask the committee to support HB503 and the prospective amendments.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be pleased to answer any questions.