

Testimony in Support of HB496

Updating the Law Governing Psychologists and School Psychologists

On Behalf of the State Board of Psychology

Ronald R. Ross, Ph.D., CPM

Executive Director

State Board of Psychology

May 23, 2012

Chairman Wachtmann, Vice Chair Gonzalez, Ranking Member Fende, and members of the House Health and Aging Committee:

I am Dr. Ronald Ross, a Clinical Psychologist and Executive Director of the State Board of Psychology. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB496, which would update ORC 4732, the enabling statute which formed the State Board of Psychology in September 1972. This is our law, the Law Governing Psychologists and School Psychologists in the State of Ohio, and it needs new life.

The year was 1972: a gallon of gasoline was around \$0.30; a gallon of milk was around a dollar; a pay phone call cost a dime; the world's first hand-held "scientific calculator" was released by Hewlett Packard—the HP-35 cost \$395; a pair of jeans was \$12.00; a new Ford Pinto was less than \$2,000; a First Class stamp cost \$0.18; the last U.S. ground forces were leaving Viet Nam; President Nixon was visiting China; Leonid Brezhnev led the Soviet Union; and, John Gilligan was the Governor of the great state of Ohio.

How things have evolved over forty years. Everything has changed. The world has undergone revolutions in politics, technology, interpersonal communications, medical treatments, engineering, entertainment, personal travel, and space exploration. We carry telephones and televisions in our pockets and our handbags. While making dinner, our children text us from their bedrooms while submitting their homework to their teachers through a Web portal. Everything, it seems, has changed.

Everything that is, except for ORC Chapter 4732, the laws and rules governing psychologists and school psychologists. But for a couple of amendments to add a mandatory continuing education requirement for biennial license renewal in 1996, and a 2002 amendment that tweaked the composition of the Board, gave the Board summary suspension authority, and added additional continuing education requirements, our law has simply not been updated to stay current with changes in the regulation of psychology in the United States and with the regulation of other health care occupations in Ohio. If regulatory laws were iconic symbols of popular culture, the psychology law would be a disco ball. If regulatory laws were cars, ours would be a 1972 Ford Pinto—one of the thousands recalled to install a plastic plate behind the gas tank in the wake of too many rear-end accidents resulting in fires. Our law, like that infamous Pinto, needs some updates and the time is now. I am here today, with gratitude and high hopes, to highlight HB496 and to answer any questions that the members of the committee might have.

HB496 is unanimously supported by the members of the State Board of Psychology, and is the work product of numerous meetings among representatives of the Psychology Board, the Ohio Psychological Association, the Ohio School Psychologists Association, the Association of Black Psychologists, and Ohio psychologists familiar with the Board and its processes and its reputation as being fair, firm, consistent, and transparent. To provide some highlights, this bill would:

- Permit the Board to consider emergency summary suspension of a licensee via teleconference, in an effort to be more efficient and to save travel costs. Requiring members of the board to make a 7-hour round-trip drive for a ten-minute meeting is an avoidable expense and waste of resources
- Make responsible corrections to several outdated fees and establish a couple of new fees (certified license verifications & fee for non-resident to practice in Ohio temporarily) so that the Board does not lose money in the course of conducting our day-to-day office responsibilities
- Permit the Board to issue investigation-related subpoenas, as the Psychology board is only one of three of the approximately 25 healthcare regulatory boards in Ohio without this standard investigatory tool
- Amend the scope of practice for licensed school psychologists, to reflect changes in language and acceptable practices over the last forty years
- Rescind the 70's-era grandfather clause permitting licensure with a master's degree
- Add a license category for retired psychologists and school psychologists to help preserve the dignity and identity of our senior license holders, who take pride in continuing to refer to themselves as "psychologists," and to erase any fear that doing so would run afoul of our title protection language
- Require an additional hour of continuing education (CE) in ethics and professional conduct and include CE in the role of culture and/or ethnic identity as part of that category
- Allow the Board to develop or approve a colleague assistance program and allow the Board to refer licensees and applicants to the program as part of its enforcement responsibilities

The public, licensees, and the Board all stand to benefit if Ohio's psychology law is updated to respond to changes in the profession and its regulation over the last forty years. We are pleased that the process leading to this bill being before this committee was one of collaboration and partnership in an effort to make good public policy. There is no controversy of which we are aware. The time has come. Please help us turn this 1972 relic into a 2012 American sedan—responsible, safe, affordable, and built for the long run.

I would like to thank Carol Napp of LSC, whose expertise shined in our cooperative efforts to draft this bill. Thanks, too, to Justin Pinsker of LSC for his work on the bill analysis. Finally, great thanks to our co-sponsors, Representatives Hackett and Garland, for your interest in moving this process forward and for your support.

I appreciate your time and consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Ron Ross
466-1085
ronald.ross@psy.ohio.gov