



MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

S.5824 (Lanza)/A.9236 (McDonald)

AN ACT to amend the education law in relation to granting licensed psychologists prescriptive authority.

The mission of NYSPA is to advance the science and practice of psychology as a means of promoting human welfare; the organization has 16 divisions, and twelve regional affiliates, with representation from various practice areas such as addiction, clinical psychology, adult development and aging, and school psychology. NYSPA is affiliated with the American Psychological Association (APA).

This legislation would provide psychologists with limited prescriptive authority for medications customarily used in the treatment of individuals diagnosed with a mental, cognitive, nervous, emotional or behavioral disorder directly related to the scope of practice of psychologists. Pursuant to the language of the bill, a licensed psychologist would be permitted to prescribe if they received appropriate specialized training and education in preparation for prescriptive practice, passed a nationally administered certification exam, and received certification from the State Board of Psychology granting prescriptive authority.

Psychologists traditionally meet with patients once a week for 50 minutes. This time frame is conducive to forming a trusting relationship and a therapeutic alliance between patient and psychologist, which results in a thorough and accurate assessment and review of treatment options. This degree of access and understanding between psychologist and patient, allows the psychologist more opportunity to observe changes in the patient's affect, behaviors, and cognitions as the result of taking medication, and intervene more effectively to adjust dosage and evaluate treatment compliance. Rural areas of New York state are often underserved in the area of mental health and often have no immediate access to psychiatric care. Providing rigorously educated, and properly trained psychologists with the ability to prescribe psychotropic medications, makes access to quality mental health care more attainable for the people of New York.

Allowing psychologists to prescribe the medications traditionally used in the treatment of their patients, will not only increase access to mental health care in underserved and rural areas, it will preserve the continuity of care between prescriber and patient. Currently psychologists refer their patients to psychiatrists or primary care physicians for medication needs, increasing costs to the patients, and decreasing treatment compliance. A psychologist with pharmacological training would be able to detect misuse or abuse of medication, talk it through with a patient, and immediately adjust doses all in the same office visit.

For the reasons stated above, the New York State Psychological Association supports this legislation.