Quarterly Advocacy Report: Q1 2023

Introduction

Welcome to the Texas Psychological Association’s (TPA) quarterly report. The information contained within is intended to provide a brief snapshot of the advocacy efforts conducted by TPA during each three-month period.

Legislative Advocacy

The 88th legislative session, that began on January 9th, kicked off with more frenetic energy than is typical because it had been four years since the capitol had been so full. After a session dominated by COVID restrictions, staff members and guests seemed giddier to wander throughout the building. A similar excitement has permeated through TPA’s Legislative Committee, with new leadership, new lobbyists, and a new slate of items on the legislative agenda.

Our legislative agenda this session:

- Approve the current budget to provide more funding for the Mental Health Loan Repayment program. (HB1 – Bonnen)
- Protect personal information during the licensing process of mental health providers (SB510 – Perry)
- Allowing psychologists who have completed an additional master’s degree in clinical psychopharmacology to prescribe medication (HB343 – Goodwin)
- Allow courts to accept a recommendation signed by a psychologist when the reason for creating the guardianship is a mental health condition. (HB4107 – Canales)
- Create a carveout to the Licensed Specialist in School Psychology (LSOTP) licensing law for qualified psychologists

Unfortunately, no member decided to file a bill regarding LSOTPs; however, this will allow us to focus on our other four priorities.

During our TPA at the Capital days in February and March, TPA members met with legislators and staff to discuss the profession and our agenda. A conversation from our first legislative day led to us finding the author of our guardianship bill! The Capitol Days were meaningful in getting an accurate gauge of where certain members stand on our issues and an opportunity for these offices to connect faces and personal anecdotes to legislation.
TPA’s Legislative Committee meets weekly to discuss the 124 legislative measures being tracked that are progressing through the legislative process. The committee decides the position we should take on legislation that impacts psychologists and those with whom we work.

We are working with Representative Darby to include licensed psychology interns and provisionally licensed psychologists (postdocs) in his HB1879 (Relating to the provision of counseling services by certain providers under Medicaid and reimbursement for those services).

Additionally, we have been working closely with Senator Perry on SB510 (Relating to the confidentiality of certain information maintained by state licensing agencies). We contributed feedback for committee substitute language and were the only witness to testify for the bill when it was heard in the Senate Business & Commerce Committee—special thanks to Dr. Fran Douglas for sharing her expertise at the hearing. Senator Perry has appreciated us as the only association working with his office on this legislation.

A few select measures that TPA supports this session include:

- HB166 (González): Relating to the appointment of an educational representative for certain students with disabilities.
- HB446 (Craddick): Relating to the terminology used in statute to refer to intellectual disability and certain references to abolished health and human services agencies.
- HB1337 (Hull): Relating to step therapy protocols required by health benefit plans for coverage of prescription drugs for serious mental illnesses.
- SB444 (Menéndez): Relating to depression screenings for certain women in county jail or in the custody of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice

**Regulatory Advocacy**

We have had introductory conversations with Darrel Spinks, Executive Director of the Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council. We will update you as more regulatory advocacy occurs during the interim.

**To see the full list of bills TPA supports, visit our advocacy page.**

We are halfway through the session, and we continue to push legislation forward and opine on matters important to psychologists. We are confident we will have some wins to celebrate when we reach adjournment on May 29th!

Special thanks to those serving on TPA’s Legislative Committee this session: Drs. Jennifer Rockett (Chair), Hani Talebi, William July, Fran Douglas, Stephanie Robertson, David Hill, Kirk Coverstone, Cheryl Hall, Nyaz Didehbani, Kennetha Frye, Sophia Tani, Joseph McCoy, Shawn Hirsch, Megan Mooney, Susan Chanderbhan-Forde, Robin Burkes, Mike Ditsky, Elle Lockart, and Charlotte Parrott.