



PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY
OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS

Pennsylvania House Professional Licensure Committee Hearing on House Bill 1000

Written testimony of the Pennsylvania Academy of Family Physicians (PAFP)

August 7, 2023

Dear Chairmen Burns, Metzgar, and Honorable Members of the House Professional Licensure Committee:

On behalf of our more than 6,000 family physician, resident, and student members, I write to express our concerns with House Bill 1000, which would give prescriptive authority to licensed psychologists in the Commonwealth.

Family physicians value psychologists as an integral part of our patients' health care team and believe that patients are best served by a physician-led, highly coordinated team.

Family physicians are often the first point of care for a patient's mental health and behavioral issues in the Commonwealth and throughout the United States. As background, family physicians successfully complete four years of medical school plus an additional three years of rigorous training through a residency program to be licensed to practice medicine in the Commonwealth. This includes a requirement of 10,000 to 12,000 hours of patient care and extensive pharmacological training. They are highly qualified and well-equipped to prescribe medications for mental illness, pain management, and opioid use disorder.

Mental illness is widespread in Pennsylvania and across the United States. While we understand there is a significant gap in mental health care services, especially for vulnerable and rural populations, we have concerns whether allowing psychologists to prescribe medication is in the best interest of patients. Family physicians already work collaboratively with psychologists on a regular basis to treat patients through cognitive behavioral therapy, counseling, and prescription medication.

The connection between physical and mental health is undeniable. The PAFP supports collaboration between physicians and mental health professionals to ensure the highest quality care for patients. We would appreciate learning more about the details of how House Bill 1000 would be implemented in Pennsylvania and how the collaborative relationship outlined in the bill would work. We'd be happy to meet with the bill sponsor, committee Chairs, Pennsylvania Psychological Association, and other stakeholders for further discussion on the legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this to the Committee and for the thoughtful approach of the bill's sponsor, Representative Frankel.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Spencer, MD, FAAFP
President, PAFP