

TESTIMONY OF TAMMY HUGHES  
HB1000 Prescription Privileges for Psychologists in PA

Good afternoon, Chairman Burns, Chairman Metzgar, and Members of the Licensure committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. My name is Tammy Hughes and I am speaking to you today as a professor who trains licensed psychologists to practice in schools, hospitals and communities in Pennsylvania. I am a licensed psychologist, certified school psychologist and am Board Certified in School Psychology. I am a Fellow of the American Psychological Association (APA), a current member of their governance body, and have twice chaired APA's Board of Educational Affairs where APA's Commission on Accreditation reports. I also sit on Examination Stakeholder Technical Advisory Group for the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB); ASPPB is the organization which administers the qualifying examination to become licensed and represents the psychology regulatory bodies throughout Canada and the United States. In sum, I am a psychologist familiar with the organizations that ensure quality education and training experience required for patient safety and protection of the public.

I am speaking to you to express my strong support of HB1000. I am confident in the education and training, and credentialing, processes proposed for prescriptive authority to be used in the commonwealth.

Today, psychotropics can be prescribed by several primary healthcare professionals, including physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants. What HB1000 would do is allow psychologists to join the other professional groups -- Physician Assistant, Nurse Practitioner, Podiatrist, Optometrist, Dentist -- who have also sought prescription privileges in Pennsylvania. Like these professionals, I am confident that psychologists can also safely prescribe psychotropic medications. Not only are the education and training standards rigorous -- educational qualifications are compared below -- prescribing psychologists have safely and effectively prescribed psychopharmacologic medications in the Public Health Service, Indian Health Service, and the US Military for more than 25 years.

Psychiatrist	Primary Care Physician	Physician Assistant	Nurse Practitioner	Prescribing Psychologist	Podiatrist	Optometrist	Dentist
Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree
Doctoral Degree	Doctoral Degree	Master's Degree	Master's Degree	Doctoral Degree	Doctoral Degree	Doctoral Degree	Doctoral Degree
Licensing Exam	Licensing Exam	Licensing Exam	Licensing Exam	Licensing Exam	Licensing Exam	Licensing Exam	Licensing Exam
Grad Med Trainee License	Grad Med Trainee License	PA-C License	CRNP License	Psychology License	Podiatry License	Optometry License	Dental License
Residency (4 years)	Residency (3 years)			Additional Master's Degree			
Licensing Exam	Licensing Exam			National Examination			
Physician License	Physician License			Prescribing Certificate			
Prescribe Any Medication	Prescribe Any Medication	Prescribe medications under physician co-signature	Prescribe medications with collaborative agreement	Prescribe psychotropic medication only with collaborative agreement	Prescribe medications relative to speciality	Prescribe medications relative to speciality	Prescribe medications relative to speciality

As a faculty member supervising doctoral students in their clinical work, I am very aware of the unmet mental health needs in Allegheny and surrounding counties. As a researcher with over a million dollars of funding by local and national foundations my work brings me face-to-face with disenfranchised children and families needing help to negotiate the systems that are meant to serve them but have not. No matter the route - through healthcare, health and human services, education or even justice referrals - it is routine for the wait list for psychiatric care to be upwards of six months. For minoritized groups including individuals of color, those with disabilities and those living in rural or underserved areas wait times can be much longer.

Unmet psychiatric care can severely disrupt all activities of daily living. For one adolescent experiencing severe and chronic symptoms this meant frequent absences from school where he missed instruction and was no longer able to participate on the wrestling team, frequent conflicts with peers and parents when overly distressed resulted in loss of privileges and two 3-day suspensions from school. Although medications had been initially provided by the family physician, as behaviors changed the doctor felt someone trained in behavioral healthcare was required. At the time of this writing, he has been on a waiting list for eight months.

Indeed, in those cases where psychotropic medications are needed, the shortage of psychiatrists in Pennsylvania contributes to the distress felt by youth and their families.

Preparing psychologists with training shown to be effective for prescribing psychotropic medications offers Pennsylvanians new and additional options. I believe that HB1000 offers a solution to closing the gap in behavioral health care.

I urge you to support HB 1000. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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