

TESTIMONY OF GRETCHEN GENERETT
HB1000 Prescription Privileges for Psychologists in PA

Good afternoon, Chairman Burns, Chairman Metzgar, and Members of the Licensure committee. My name is Gretchen Generett, and I'd like to thank the professional licensure committee for inviting Duquesne University to speak today on the important topic of access to mental health medications in Pennsylvania. I am an educational leader concerned for the mental health and well-being of youth in Pennsylvania. I have over 25 years of experience working with teachers and school building leaders who serve historically marginalized and under-resourced communities and I currently serve as the Dean of the School of Education at Duquesne University.

Whether you live in an urban, rural, or suburban community, the growing need for mental health professionals impacts us all. Data tell us that child mental health disorders are increasing and that there are not enough professionals to serve youth in need. Less than half of people with mental health needs have access to the care they need (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2022). In rural communities, the barriers to access mental health supports are even greater (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2023). Our concern for youth living in communities without access to mental health professionals is that they will be relegated to lives as second-class citizens.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted for educators and communities that mental health challenges are negatively impacted by system failures that create barriers to being able to access needed services. Our role in the School of Education is to serve communities throughout the life span in holistic ways so that individuals can live purposeful and productive lives. As educational professionals, it is our responsibility to identify and work to remove barriers that prevent individuals from being successful.

Here's what we know from our neighboring communities.

Like other areas of the country, schools are the number one place to access mental health services; 75% of those who can get services do so at school. It is well documented that one in five children and adolescents experience a mental health disorder during their school-age years. and half of all occurrences of chronic mental illness begin by age fourteen. 10% of students in Pennsylvania reported attempting suicide at least once in the past year. 97% of Pennsylvania Counties are "insufficient" in access to child and adolescent psychiatrists. Using the metric of the number of child and adolescent psychiatrists to 100,000 youth under 18 we know:

Allegheny County	has 42 per 100k kids
Beaver County	has 16 per 100k kids
Butler County	has 3 per 100k kids
Washington County	has 10 per 100k kids
Westmoreland County	has 8 per 100k kids

<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/ikepoolman/viz/2019CAPs/2019CAPs>

The lack of trained, available mental health professionals is a cause for great alarm. We know that educators need the support of mental health professionals so that they can appropriately meet the academic needs of their students. Simply stated, the lack of access to mental health services is preventing many bright and capable young people from learning. Professionals in the School of Education are trained to meet this critical need. If this legislation passes, the School of Education at Duquesne will enthusiastically start the process to determine the viability of a program to produce more mental health professionals who are able to address mental health from a wholistic approach. In doing so, we will actively remove barriers for youth who currently do not have access to mental health services.

Thus, I urge this committee to approve this legislation Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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