

**Testimony in Support of Am. HB503
Senate Health, Human Services and Aging Committee
Senator Kevin Coughlin, Chair
December 3, 2008**

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Executive Director, State Board of Psychology**



Mr. Chairman, Vice Chair Wagoner, Ranking Minority Member Smith, and Committee members:

I am Dr. Ronald Ross. I am a clinical psychologist by training and for the past 7 years I have been the full-time Executive Director of the State Board of Psychology. Thank you for the opportunity to ask you to support Am. HB503, which is the culmination of approximately 3 years of collaboration among the Psychology Board, the Ohio Psychological Association, the Association of Black Psychologists, the Ohio School Psychologists Association, and numerous stakeholders in the academic and psychology training communities.

The primary purpose of Am. HB503 is to align our licensing law with the realities of graduate education as they now exist, not as they existed when our law was written approximately 36 years ago. The bill is centered first on training, by fostering a flexible model in the sequence of pre-licensure experience; and second on academic accreditation, by ensuring that all of our psychologists come from doctoral degree programs that meet minimum educational standards. As a reminder, this bill passed out of the House Health Committee and the House by unanimous votes.

- First, the Psychology Board supports Am. HB503 because it does not reduce the statutory pre-licensure training hours. **The current 2-year requirement is retained**, while allowing doctoral programs and psychologists-in-training flexibility to have the training completed before the doctorate is conferred. Current law requires 1 year of supervised experience after the award of the doctorate, regardless of the amount and quality of pre-doctoral training. The requirement for this “post-doc” year has been in the Board’s law since it was enacted in 1972, when it was intended to serve as a public safeguard to ensure that Ohio psychologists had at least 2 years of pre-licensure experience. The past 36 years have seen maturation in the education and training of professional psychologists, including the development of accreditation standards for academic programs and training sites. Today many psychologists-in-training already have well over two years of supervised experience by the time the pre-doctoral internship is completed and the doctorate conferred. By recognizing this reality, the one-size-fits-all mandatory “post-doc” year is no longer appropriate as a requirement for the psychologist license.

- Second, the Psychology Board supports Am. HB503 because educational standards in the training of psychologists are firmly established, and this bill would require Ohio's psychologists to come from programs with an external seal of approval (the APA, the National Register/Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards Designation Committee, the National Association of School Psychologists, and the Canadian Psychological Association are the recognized entities in the bill). Ohio is among a small minority of states in the country with no degree-program accreditation requirements for psychologist licensure. This bill would **assure that all of Ohio's psychologists come from academic programs that meet national educational standards**, while recognizing that 2 years of satisfactory pre-licensure training can be completed without the inflexible post-doc requirement.
- Third, the grandfathering provision in Am. HB503 ensures that any student enrolled in a non-accredited doctoral program currently and even those enrolled within 60 days after the effective date of this bill would have 8 years to complete the degree from the non-accredited program and retain license eligibility. In addition, the Board would write rules to define "program accreditation" in a way that preserves license eligibility for any student from any program that receives accreditation within 3 years after the degree is conferred. Unaccredited programs will have approximately 8-10 years to earn program accreditation so that none of its future graduates fall through any cracks. Therefore, this bill provides **fairness and important safeguards** to students, prospective students, and academic programs.
- Finally, the State Board of Psychology asks that you **pass this bill without additional amendments**. The Psychology Board understands that there might be efforts underway to amend this bill to provide special treatment for unaccredited "online" programs by exempting them from meeting accreditation requirements. The Psychology Board does not oppose the use of Internet technologies in doctoral psychology education, as long as the degree program has been judged to meet minimum educational standards. Accreditation or designation is possible for all doctoral psychology programs, and there is at least 1 APA-accredited "online" program (Fielding Graduate University). Please resist last-minute attempts to derail what has been a collaborative work in broad daylight for nearly 3 years. At its meeting on November 21, the Psychology Board voted unanimously to direct me to testify today for Am. HB503 as it stands, and to oppose any efforts to circumvent or weaken the academic accreditation requirements. Please support Am. HB503 without additional amendments so that the public can be assured that Ohio's next generation of psychologists are coming out of programs that meet minimum academic standards, while still being required to demonstrate 2 years of satisfactory training.

Thank you for your time and your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.