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**KANSAS PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION**

**SUBMITTED TESTIMONY/WRITTEN-ONLY**

**TO: Representative Dan Hawkins  
And Members Of The Special Committee on the Organization of  
Public Health Boards**

**FROM: Whitney Damron.  
On Behalf Of The  
Kansas Psychological Association**

**RE: Organization of Public Health Boards**

**DATE: December 14, 2016**

The Kansas Psychological Association represents psychologists in our state. They comprise the most advanced trained group of non-physician mental and behavioral health specialists in the state of Kansas. According to the Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board website, there are 784 psychologists with active licenses in our state. While some licensed psychologists work in hospitals, community mental health centers, higher education institutions, and correctional facilities, a large number of licensed psychologists provide services via small individual or group practices.

Psychology is unique among the mental health professions in requiring the doctoral degree for entry-level licensure in Kansas and throughout the country. According to the American Psychological Association (APA) the doctoral degree is the entry-level degree for the practice of psychologists. Masters' degree holders do not qualify as 'psychologists' or 'licensed psychologists' under Kansas state statute, rules, and regulations. The state of Kansas has been unique, in that oversight for the profession of psychology has been achieved by an omnibus board that represents the gamut of mental health professions representing a variety of undergraduate and graduate degrees, as well as many different helping professions from social work, marriage and family therapy, and substance abuse treatment professionals. For example, the BSRB Complaint Review Committee is comprised of five Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board Members. Three members are licensed and from three different professions. The other two members are public members who serve on the Board. Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board staff and disciplinary counsel from the Attorney General's office serve on the committee in an advisory capacity. No other state has this type of arrangement, placing mental health helping professions under the authority of one governing board.

Regarding the change to the structure of professional licensing in the State of Kansas, the KPA assumes such a change is being contemplated for a variety of reasons, most notably efficiency in structuring such organizations and greater financial accountability to licensees and taxpayers. In light of these possible changes, the KPA is, of course concerned about preserving their scope of practice and autonomy as psychologists, as well as continued protection of the public with respect to ethical and professional oversight of psychologists practicing in Kansas. The KPA is also concerned about representing the interests of our members in advocating continued fair and affordable licensing fees, as well as administrative procedures concerning licensing, renewal of licensing, and the adjudication of ethical complaints that are easily understood and maintainable.

In the event that a change is made to the board structure, the KPA would like to let members of the legislature know what the KPA would like to see happen with the licensing of the profession of psychology in Kansas. Most other states have adopted a “super board” structure that allows each profession’s autonomy, while sharing administrative staff to reduce redundancy between state licensing authorities. If such a super board were to be posited, KPA is advocating for a separate Board or committee that is linked to the super-board made up of psychologists specifically to oversee psychologists. Such a structure would allow the profession of psychology to appropriately protect the public by ensuring that the American Psychological Association code of ethics is enforced, applied and maintained. Such a board structure would also allow the profession of psychology to ensure that state statutes continue to appropriately reflect broader national standards for the profession (e.g., educational standards; code of ethics changes).

On behalf of the members of the Kansas Psychological Association, I thank you for your consideration of KPA’s position.

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