



May 27, 2009

Ms. Pamela A. McCoy
President
Maryland School Psychologists' Association
4585 Kingscup Court
Ellicott City, Maryland 21042-5392

Dear Ms. McCoy:

I am responding, to your letter of May 12, 2009, to Dr. Jerry D. Weast, superintendent of schools, concerning the proposed revision of the *Model Act for State Licensure* (MLA) proposed by the American Psychological Association (APA). The superintendent and Dr. Frieda K. Lacey, deputy superintendent of schools, are in agreement with Dr. Nancy Grasmick, state superintendent of schools, in opposing the revision as they are keenly aware that the proposal will result in significant limitations to the role and function of school psychologists in Maryland. Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has encouraged letter writing to Dr. James H. Bray, Assistant Executive Director, Practice Research and Policy, Practice Directorate, of the APA to affirm our system's conviction that the long-held exemption for non-doctoral level school psychologists must be reinstated.

We concur that adding barriers to practice by removing the school psychology exemption from the model licensure act poses real harm to children, families, and schools. There is no public benefit to removing it now. Moreover, ample protections exist in current state policies and laws to ensure the quality of services provided by school psychologists credentialed by their state boards of education.

MCPS affirms the following reasons for reinstating the school psychology exemption in the APA model licensure act:

1. All school psychologists provide critical services that support the mental health and academic achievement of all children.
 - School psychologists are trained at both the specialist level and doctoral level to implement evidence-based prevention activities and to provide interventions for mental health and learning issues at the individual, group, and schoolwide levels.
 - Today, there is significant recognition within the education and health communities of

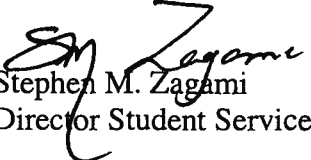
the importance of having school-employed professionals like school psychologists to provide services in order to meet the growing needs of students.

- The 1987 title exemption for school psychologists benefits families who rely on access to mental health and academic support services offered through the schools.
 - Research demonstrates that providing mental health services in schools removes common access barriers resulting in increased numbers of students and families receiving needed services.
2. Removing the exemption undermines mental health and academic support services to children and families at a time of growing need and current shortage, especially in schools in rural and urban areas.
- There is a shortage of school psychologists in many under-resourced urban and rural school settings.
 - The shortages are even more critical given a significant unmet need for individuals of minority and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to serve in school settings.
 - Removing the exemption will worsen this situation by adding potential barriers for those who seek specialist level entry to school-based practice.
 - Policymakers and professional organizations should be working to find ways to expand, not restrict, the availability of appropriately trained school psychologists who can provide high quality services to the children, families, and schools who need them the most.
3. The public is well protected, and services to children and families in schools are strengthened, by state laws and codes that regulate the practice and credentialing of school psychologists by state education agencies.
- State education agencies already have stringent standards for the graduate education and state credentialing of school psychologists, which protect the public.
 - Removing the school psychologist exemption from the APA model licensure act creates potential conflict within state legislation and regulation that has served the public, particularly schools, well.
 - Removing the exemption for school psychologists is a guild issue that would only benefit

licensed psychologists, and does harm to consumers who cannot afford to lose access to the free mental health and academic support services provided by school psychologists in the school setting.

MCPS remains steadfast in its support of school psychologists and will continue to encourage APA to reinstate the exemption.

Sincerely,


Stephen M. Zagami
Director Student Services

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Copy to:

Dr. Weast
Dr. Lacey
Dr. Wright
Mr. Kamins
Mr. Bartels