



May 22, 2009

James H. Bray, Ph. D.
President
American Psychological Association
750 First Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002-4241

Dear Dr. Bray:

Permit me to add my voice to the crescendo of those writing in opposition to the ill-conceived proposal to revise the Model Act for State Licensure of Psychologists so as to remove the long-standing (over three decades) exemption for non-doctoral school psychologists practicing within the confines of school systems. As a former middle school and high school principal, central office administrator, and now superintendent of schools, I have had the professional experience of working alongside of school psychologists who serve our children and families – many with extenuating needs. This proposal will have the unintended consequence of harming those in urban, suburban, and rural parts of our nation who rely greatly upon the mental health services of these very able and qualified professionals who would be adversely affected by the proposal before the APA. For the reasons that follow, I urge its rejection.

School psychologists in Maryland, as in most states, possess a separate state certification set forth by the State Board of Education but are precluded from practicing independently outside of the school environment without a license. On the other hand, again as is common throughout the United States, licensed psychologists are not employable in school districts unless they possess state certification from the respective State department of education. However, to remove the exemption that now exists for school psychologists who do not hold a doctoral degree is antithetical to the mental health needs of children and their families long advanced by the American Psychological Association.

School psychologists are assigned to every public school in our county. They help teachers, parents, and community groups to understand students' emotional and learning needs, focusing attention on their developmental needs. School psychologists engage in assessments of students by interviewing and evaluating them to measure their academic achievement and learning aptitudes, their self-help and social skills, their motor development, and their personality and emotional development.

One of the significant attributes of school psychologists – as a result of their education, training, and experience – is the ability to work in an inter-disciplinary fashion among many sister agencies – whether it be Social Services, Health, Juvenile Services, the Courts, or Corrections – to focus on solutions for the individual child. Within our own school system, our school psychologists

Dr. Bray
May 22, 2009
Page Two

work in a coordinated fashion with educational professionals, counselors, school social workers, pupil personnel workers, school nurses, speech and language pathologists, special educators, and a host of other professionals to address the needs of students and their parents.

Since the advent of Public Law 94-142 in the early 1970's, and all subsequent revisions now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, school psychologists have been on the front line of providing assessments and services to our disabled students – our most vulnerable population. In our school district, school psychologists provide the direct counseling and psychological services mandated by the IEP teams to assist students to benefit from their specialized instruction.

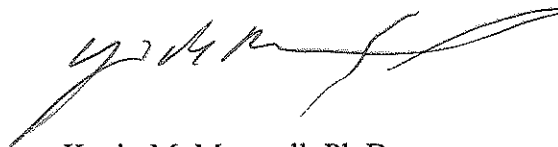
Thanks to the advancements in modern medicine, coupled with the expansion of Child Find, school districts throughout the United States serve more fragile children than ever before, serve more multiply-disabled students than ever before, and serve students whose educational and psychological assessments must be able to withstand the scrutiny of layers of due process. This requires an increasing need for qualified school psychologists.

We also find in Anne Arundel County, as in all school districts throughout our State and elsewhere in the nation, an increasing reliance upon good school psychologists for the wide panoply of services attendant to alternative education programs to address behavior modification. Whether it be assessment or interventive services, school psychologists are qualified to bring their skills and training to defuse and deescalate a situation, to begin to modify behavior, to teach coping skills, to empower peers and adults, and to reflect on better ways of doing things.

With the foregoing in mind, I implore you to consider these views, and those of my like-minded colleagues, to reconsider and step back from the proposed elimination of the decades-long exemption allowing school psychologists with Master's Degrees to proudly and properly use "psychologist" within the domain of school districts and public education. In doing so, the American Psychological Association will remain on the forefront of advocating for the needs of our youth and their families without doing violence to the principles upon which the Association was founded.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Kevin M. Maxwell, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

KMM/djs

cc: Nancy Grasmick, Maryland State Superintendent of Schools
Lynn Bufka, Chair, APA Model Act Task Force