

**SOUTH
CAROLINA
ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOL
PSYCHOLOGISTS**

P.O. BOX 11711 CAPITOL STATION
COLUMBIA SC 29211 • 790-6895
DIRECTOR, Sandra C. Manning, Ph.D.

SCASP Response to the APA/Model Licensure Act

Dear APA Model Licensure Act Task Force Members:

This letter is written on behalf of the S.C. Association of School Psychologists (SCASP) to express our views on school psychologist licensure and the proposed Model Licensure Act (MLA). We strongly oppose the removal of the exemption for specialist level school psychologists to use the title "School Psychologist" and to provide school-based psychological services. Both specialist level and doctoral level school psychologists are experts in the fields of psychology and education. They provide high quality psychological services in schools and improve the educational, behavioral, adaptive, social, and emotional outcomes of children enabling them to achieve in school and in life. Implementing this change would inevitably have a negative impact on children and their education by denying the well-established practice of school psychology by properly credentialed personnel. Specialist level school psychologists have been practicing independently in schools for fifty years. The proposed change in the MLA would unjustly remove the rights of more than 80% of practicing school psychologists in the state of South Carolina to perform duties for which they are legitimately credentialed and qualified.

The proposed change to the MLA, if accepted, would quickly create undue and excessive conflict legislatively within the state. A recent professional proactive survey conducted by SCASP indicates that in South Carolina, over 80% of school psychologists are credentialed/certified through the State Department of Education with only 16% of those certified at a doctoral level. Results from the same survey indicate that only 5% of School Psychologists in the state are licensed. Removal of these professionals would only exacerbate the problems caused by the already existing shortage in school psychologists. In addition, multiple changes in legislation would need to occur in the following areas and would have a significant impact: 1. state and federal legislation (all laws referring to "school psychologists"; 2. state department of education (credentialing policies/procedure and funding mechanisms); 3. school districts (hiring and practicing policies; 4. conflict between all licensing/credentialing bodies; 4. individual school psychologists (disenfranchised from their title and professional identity). This will cause unnecessary confusion in every area mentioned above and will undoubtedly impede the

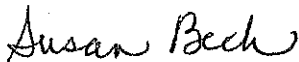
delivery of needed educational, behavioral, emotional, and social (psychological) services to children. The removal of the specialist level exemption poses a high risk of hurting children, families, and schools creating barriers to receiving much needed services. There is no basis in research that non-doctoral school psychologists cause public harm, but the removal of the exemption poses the potential of tremendous harm to children, families, and the educational system.

It is the mission of SCASP to work to facilitate optimal education for all children and to improve quality of school psychological services in South Carolina. The proposed changes to the MLA would derail our mission and create harm for those we now serve. SCASP strongly opposes the removal of the school psychology exemption from the Model Act and the requirement of a doctoral degree to provide school psychological services. SCASP strongly urges APA to reinstate the exemption in the best interest of our children and schools.

Respectfully,



Lynn Collins
State SPAN Contact for SC



Susan Beck
SCASP President