

CINDY SMITH
PRESIDENT
VASP@COX.NET



6054 PONTEFRAC DRIVE
NEW KENT, VA 23124
804-932-8233

Virginia Academy of School Psychologists

www.vaspweb.org

May 7, 2009

James Bray, President
Psychological Association
Washington, DC 20002

American
750 First St. NE

Dear Dr. Bray:

This is to express the Virginia Academy of School Psychologists' strong opposition to the removal of the exemption in the proposed APA Model Act for State Licensure for Psychologists that permits specialist level school psychologists to practice their profession within the public school setting. We believe that the mental health and well-being of Virginia's children and families would be compromised were Virginia to adopt the language currently proposed.

We maintain that specialist level school psychologists are highly trained to provide psychological and educational services to children and youth. Because of our unique background in cognitive, psychological, and academic assessment and intervention, we are in a position to provide services that promote good mental health and learning outcomes for Virginia's students.

School psychologists have provided mental health services to children in Virginia's schools for many years and have become a well-established resource within the public school setting. In many of Virginia's rural areas, school psychologists provide the only mental health services that are available within a reasonable distance and do not require insurance. We believe that removing the exemption that recognizes the training and competence of school psychologists to practice within our area of expertise would deny many children and families access to mental health resources and would ultimately result in harm to children. We are concerned that, should Virginia elect to adopt the proposed MLA, limiting this access is likely to have a disproportionate effect on Virginia's most vulnerable children who live in poverty or in other adverse conditions.

CINDY SMITH

PRESIDENT
6054 PONTEFRAC DRIVE
NEW KENT, VA 23124
804-932-8233
VASP@COX.NET

SARAH NEVILL

SECRETARY
206 WINCHESTER STREET
WARRENTON, VA 20186
540-347-7284
SNEVILL@CULPEPERSCHOOLS.ORG

TOM BYRNES

TREASURER
9716 SEABREEZE ROAD
NORFOLK, VA 23503
757-393-8766
THOMAS.BYRNES@PPS.K12.VA.US

BARBARA BANZE

PRESIDENT-ELECT
8441 ARTHUR DRIVE
SUFFOLK, VA 23438
757-393-8766
BARBARA.BANZE@PPS.K12.VA.US

The National Association of School Psychologists and the American Psychological Association have a long history of working together to ensure that training programs and credentialing standards are high and sustained. In fact, many of the school psychology training programs are credentialed by the American Psychological Association. Perhaps a focus on strengthening the partnership between our organizations would be a better focus for the resources of the associations. Such a shift in focus would certainly better serve children and families.

In summary, school psychologists who are trained at the specialist level possess unique training in both education and psychology, as well as distinct skills that are specific to our work with students, parents, and other educators. Without access to our services, educational and mental health outcomes may be compromised. We urge the American Psychological Association to reinstate the language in its Model Licensure Act that provides an exemption for credentialed school psychologists to practice their profession within the school setting and within their area of specialized training. Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Cindy P. Smith, M.Ed., NCSP, President
Virginia Academy of School Psychologists

cc: Model Act Task Force