



GEORGIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

~ Caring for Children in Georgia since 1970! ~

Date: March 29th, 2016

Re: Legislation to Define Psychological Testing

Dear Dr. Rogers,

The executive board of the Georgia Association of School Psychologists (GASP) would like to thank Representatives Chandler, Cooper, Pruett, Dempsey, and Gardner for proposing House Bill 395. While this bill did not pass during the 2016 session, our understanding is that it was intended to define the term "psychological testing" within private practice and to clarify that professional counselors, social workers, and marriage and family therapists are not authorized to conduct psychological testing, to clarify that psychological testing is part of the scope of practice of licensed psychologists, and to provide that such licensed persons are able to administer such tests as defined.

Indeed, GASP believes that legislation to define psychological testing is extremely important for the future of mental health practitioners in Georgia. Properly defining the phrase "psychological testing" as well as who is authorized to provide such testing may help to ensure the integrity of psychological assessments, which may ultimately lead to better outcomes for the individuals we serve. Despite our support of this form of legislation, we would like to express several concerns with wording and/or definitions specific to the proposed HB 395.

First, the title "school psychologist" is not explicitly referenced as a professional who is legally able to administer psychological assessments in HB 395. We express this concern in full recognition that the most recent version of HB 395 defines a psychologist as "any person duly *licensed* to practice psychology in this state under Chapter 39 of Title 43." However, GA Code § 43-39-7 (2014) distinguishes school psychologists from other psychologists by stating "Nothing in this chapter shall require licensure for a person who is certified as a school psychologist by the Professional Standards Commission while that person is working as an employee in an educational institution recognized by the State Board of Examiners of Psychologists..." The fact that GA Code § 43-39-7 (2014) makes this distinction reinforces our belief that it is necessary to avoid confusion in legislation that aims to define who can and cannot perform psychological tests.

In further support of this distinction, we would like to point out that the term "licensed" is not referenced in GA Code § 43-39-7 (2014) with regard to school psychologists; rather, we are "certified" to practice school psychology through the Professional Standards Commission. Additionally, we would also like to note that GA Code § 43-39-1 (2014) defines "practicing psychology" to include diagnosing mental illness, yet diagnosis (in the clinical sense) is not generally within the scope of a school psychologist's responsibilities.

In closing, we respectfully request that Representatives Chandler, Cooper, Pruett, Dempsey, Gardner, and others consider explicitly distinguishing school psychologists from other mental health practitioners in any future legislation that is proposed to define psychological testing. We request wording stating that school psychologists are trained and legally certified to administer and interpret psychological assessments as defined in the proposed HB 395. Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

Executive Board, Georgia Association of School Psychologists
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