



July 28, 2023

The Honorable Frank Burns
House Professional Licensure Committee, Chair
332 Main Capitol Building
P.O. Box 202072
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2072
(717) 772-8056
Fax: (717) 772-9965

The Honorable Carl Walker Metzgar
House Professional Licensure Committee, Chair
216 Ryan Office Building
P.O. Box 202069
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2069
(717) 783-8756
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RE: House Bill 1000 – Support – House Professional Licensure Committee Hearing on 8/7/23 at 1pm

Dear Chairman Burns and Chairman Metzgar and Members of the House Professional Licensure Committee:

On behalf of the Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth and Family Services (PCCYFS), I am writing in support of House Bill 1000, which grants prescribing authority to psychologists with advanced, specialized training. PCCYFS is the collective voice for private agencies that serve Pennsylvania's most vulnerable children and their families. PCCYFS represents nearly 100 private agencies employing more than 10,000 professionals statewide. Their services include juvenile justice, foster/kinship care, adoption, residential treatment, behavioral health services, education, independent/transitional living services and many others.

Mental health service access, especially to prescribe medications and provide therapeutic intervention, is urgently needed for our youth as outlined in [PCCYFS' position statement: The shortage of child psychiatrists in Pennsylvania serving the public sector.](#)¹ As stigma decreases in the community, we see more people and youth seek out treatment, which then increases demand. The workforce needs to keep up with the demand for mental health services and allowing psychologists to prescribe would only help with this trend. According to the U.S Department of Health and Human Services, the current workforce of about 45,580 psychiatrists must increase by 2,800 to meet today's demands for psychiatric care. This works out to a 6.4 percent shortage. By 2025, that shortage could be as high as 6,090 psychiatrists.

The wait times that youth must endure to see a psychiatrist and receive a prescription can prolong a stay in a higher level of care if appropriate discharge services cannot be scheduled and exacerbates

¹PA Council of Children, Youth & Family Services. *On-going Shortage of Psychiatrists in PA Available to Treat Children*. (2021) <https://pccyfs.org/pccyfs-position-statement-on-going-shortage-of-psychiatrists-in-pa-available-to-treat-children/>



emergency visits which can lead to an increase in symptoms and a traumatic experience for a youth and caregivers. Providers are also challenged when obtaining psychiatry services for their programs as there are no available psychiatrists to meet their needs. Although primary care physicians can prescribe mental health medications, many will understandably decline to do so as it is not their specialty.

Several states, such as Louisiana, New Mexico, Illinois, Iowa, Idaho, as well as Indian Health Services, have already allowed psychologists to prescribe medications. This addition of psychologist's prescriptive rights would help child-serving providers and youth have more access to the quality mental health care they so desperately need and would assist psychiatrists to decrease the extensive wait times for their service. Working together, both medical professionals can start to make access to Pennsylvania's mental health services easier and attainable for our most vulnerable population. Accordingly, I respectfully request a favorable vote on House Bill 1000.

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me at terryc@pccyfs.org or 717-651-1725.

Sincerely,

Terry L. Clark, MPA
President/CEO, PCCYFS

Cc: Representative Dan Frankel