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Senator Melony Griffith, Chair
Senator Katherine Klausmeier, Vice Chair
Finance Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 East
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 26 Health Occupations – Psychologists – Licensure Qualifications

Position: **Support**

Dear Chair Griffith, Vice-Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to you on HB 26. I wanted to take the opportunity to **strongly urge you to provide a FAVORABLE REPORT on HB 26.**

I am a licensed psychologist in Maryland who lives and works in Maryland. I have been in practice for about 30 years and have never experienced the demand for mental health services that I have witnessed over the last year or two. On average I turn away 30-40 people a month who are seeking mental health care. I am a solo practitioner. I share this with you to give you some sense of the size of the need for mental health services today as those in group practices I know are also being overwhelmed by the demand for mental health services. I believe that demand has spiked, as a result, of the stressors encountered while living through the COVID-19 Pandemic and the continuing progress that has been made to destigmatize mental health care in Maryland.

HB 26, at its heart, is designed to increase access to care while maintaining the quality of mental health care in Maryland at a time of unprecedented demand for mental health services. Some have called this the second pandemic that will be with us as COVID-19 becomes endemic.

HB 26 amends Article - Health Occupations Section 18-101(c) and 18-302(f) Annotated Code of Maryland, **formally** creating a third path to licensure as a psychologist. This path is only provided to those individuals who already possess a doctoral degree in psychology that does not specifically train an individual to provide mental health services directly to individuals in the public. HB 26 does this by allowing those individuals, who already possess a doctoral degree in psychology, to return to a psychology department that is American Psychological Association (APA) or Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) accredited to offer one of the three degrees that allow one to provide mental health services to the public, in order for those individuals to obtain the additional education and training required to re-specialize as a mental health service provider. This training and education are designed, by the psychology department, to be equivalent to that obtained by one who obtains a doctoral degree directly from a program accredited to grant degrees to mental health specialists. This path eliminates the need for individuals already possessing a doctoral degree in psychology to obtain a second doctoral degree, saving one year of time and thousands of dollars to provide desperately needed mental health services to the public, **hence lowering an unnecessary barrier to practice.**

HB 26 will lessen the burden for all who travel this path to obtain a license, but it will most certainly lessen the burden on those in lower income groups who would be unable to find the funds to acquire a

second degree. Hence, HB 26 offers the hope of adding additional diversity to the mental health workforce as well as adding more providers.

Please note HB 26 specifically addresses the training requirements to insure that those graduating from re-specialization programs have equivalent training to those graduating from programs providing the three degrees currently accredited by APA and/or CPA.

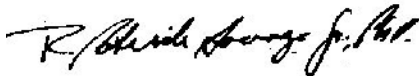
It is also important to note that these re-specialization programs are accepted as adequate proof of training and education to practice psychology by many other states, the VA and the Federal Government. It is my understanding, that there are already psychologists who graduated from a re-specialization program granted licenses and practicing in Maryland.

I want to emphasize that this bill creates a pathway to licensure while preserving the level of education and training of providers entering the practice of psychology in Maryland, and placing no real additional burden on the Board of Examiners who oversees the profession of psychology in Maryland. Our hope is that this bill takes one small step towards expanding the mental health workforce in the state of Maryland.

I ask that you provide a **FAVORABLE report on HB26**. It is one small step of many that will result in increased access to quality mental health care in Maryland.

I thank you for this opportunity to address you. I would be glad to answer any questions that might arise or clarify any concerns you might have. I can be reached at my email at doctorpat@olneynorthbethesdapscychology.com or by phone at 301-587-2818.

Sincerely



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