

House Industry, Business and Labor Committee
Representative Scott Louser, Chair
March 28, 2023
SB 2205

Good morning, Chairman Louser and members of the House Industry, Business and Labor Committee. For the record, I am Dr. Jon Ulven and I am a licensed psychologist with Sanford Health Fargo where I serve as the Adult Psychology Department Chair and have the honor of providing clinical care to patients and supervising psychology residents as they train to become part of the behavioral health workforce. I was born in North Dakota, and I have been with Sanford Health for over 18 years.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 2205, a bill that would allow North Dakota to join the Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact known as PSYPACT. The compact allows psychologists in participating jurisdictions to practice across state lines via telepsychology or temporary in-person practice. In doing so, PSYPACT provides an opportunity to bring safe and high quality psychological services to North Dakota.

North Dakota, like every other state, is facing a mental health crisis. Unfortunately, our state has its fair share of mental illness, but less than our fair share of behavioral health professionals. The answer to addressing our state's behavioral health provider shortage is multifaceted, but I believe that we owe the citizens of North Dakota access to high quality services that are appropriately regulated. Licensure compacts are a proven tool to ease the burden of vetting out-of-state license applications and expediting what is otherwise often times a slow process.

I would also like to voice support for the amendment designed to allow the N.D. State Board of Psychologist Examiners to outline the scope and oversight of psychology predoctoral interns who offer psychological services to North Dakota citizens. Both the bill and the amendment will help the state of North Dakota improve our citizens' access to safe and high quality behavioral health services.

Although I am happy to answer questions related to PSYPACT, I will focus my testimony on the amendment.

A psychology predoctoral intern is a graduate student who is working toward earning a doctoral degree in psychology and working toward becoming independently licensed as a psychologist. Predoctoral interns have completed all of their coursework for their doctoral degree. They have completed at least three practical

clinical experiences. One of the last requirements for their doctoral degree is a paid, yearlong practical training experience, which is called the predoctoral internship.

The predoctoral internship is a highly regulated training experience that involves weekly didactic training seminars, several hours of supervision per week, clinical work in which the interns provide psychological services to patients, and exposure to different ways that psychologists provide care.

Predoctoral interns practice psychology under the license of a psychologist who is responsible for their professional activities. Once the internship is completed, and their doctoral degree is awarded, the interns go on to become psychology residents and pursue the last leg of becoming licensed as a psychologist.

Predoctoral interns can provide much-needed professional psychological services to the citizens of North Dakota. Predoctoral interns have as much training and clinical experience as some licensed behavioral health professionals in the state.

In terms of behavioral health workforce development, at Sanford Health we plan to have a predoctoral internship class of three starting in August of 2023. We are creating a psychology residency program simultaneously so that our interns can stay with us and become licensed as psychologists; we will have at least three residency positions. That means within the next two years, we will have six positions for trainees in psychology each year. Those trainees collectively will see over 800 unique patients per year.

In conclusion, Sanford Health supports the licensure compact and the proposed amendment that will enable predoctoral psychology interns to be a part of North Dakota's plan to grow our behavioral health workforce.

Thank you for your consideration.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,
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Member of North Dakota Psychological Association