

Dr. Nicole Dorsey

Sunset Advisory Commission
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Testimony regarding the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists
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Mr. Chair and Members of the Commission,

My name is Dr. Nicole Dorsey and I am a licensed psychologist in Houston, TX and I have been in practice for 15 years. I am here to testify on behalf of the Texas Psychological Association and I want to encourage you to keep the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists as an independent board. I am currently a Training Director at an internship site that is accredited by the American Psychological Association. In this position, I supervise beginning level and advanced level graduate students, students who are completing their internship year, and post-doctoral residents. I also provide clinical consultation to licensed clinicians and psychologists. Given the varying skill level of clinicians that I supervise, it is essential for me to be able to consult with a Board that understands this complexity and the different needs of all of these clinicians. I am concerned that losing our board would make it very difficult to address the wide variety of problems that could potentially arise and that our ability to implement appropriate policies would be compromised.

I would also like to speak directly regarding my support in retaining the requirement of the post-doctoral year. In my role as Training Director, I have had the opportunity to supervise a large number of potential psychologists. The post-doctoral year provides us with an excellent opportunity to allow these psychologists to have more independence than they had prior to obtaining their degree, while still receiving guidance from supervision. This level of experience is different from that which is obtained at the internship level, in which the future psychologist is still seen as a student, rather than a professional. Most post-docs flourish in this setting and by the end of the year, they have clearly demonstrated that they are ready to be on their own. However, there have been a small minority of individuals where I have had to discuss with them their readiness or skill level to become an independently licensed psychologist. Unfortunately, in these situations, I could not, in good conscience, recommend this person to go out on his or her own to practice, knowing that the welfare of their clients was at risk. When clients seek services from someone they are referring to as "doctor", they have the expectation, rightfully so, that this professional is a highly skilled individual, who is able to manage even the most complex and urgent situations.

My experiences as a Training Director have also given me the opportunity to see the importance of the oral exam. A career as a psychologist is one in which it is crucial to be able to interact with all different kinds of people and situations, and to be able to think on your feet. The oral exam allows neutral psychologists the opportunity to objectively assess these skills. As most of those who do not pass the exam do not pass due to their ability to manage a crisis situation, this is of great concern. That is the time when a psychologist's skill level is most crucial and we cannot allow even one psychologist a year to become an independent practitioner if he or she does not have the ability to manage a life or death situation.

Thank you for your time.