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TESTIMONY TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SUNSET ADVISORY COMMISSION

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Thank you, Chairman Birdwell, and Distinguished Members of the Commission for this opportunity to testify. I'm Dr. Bonny Gardner and have practiced in Dallas and now Austin for 27 years. I've provided evaluations and psychotherapy services to adults, children, and families and have also done forensic work with Social Security Disability. I've served on the Board of Texas Psychological Association and Chair a Committee which focuses on access to care issues. I'm also a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist.

1)The mission of the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists (TSBEP) is to protect the health and safety of the public by developing rules that maintain established standards for the practice of psychology and enforcing those rules. The TSBEP is functioning effectively and efficiently by many measures. Consolidation of the TSBEP with other behavioral health boards will weaken its ability to protect the public. Psychology is a vast, complex field with many specialties and differences from other mental health professions. There's a need for Board members knowledgeable about these complexities and psychology's unique code of ethics to develop and enforce rules. The only voting members of the proposed BHEC are public members and there may not even be one licensed psychologist in an advisory role. This model does not allow for appropriate input from psychologists to protect the public.

2) Only one other state, Kansas, has consolidated psychology with other behavioral health professions in a state board. Colorado and New Hampshire tried this model and rejected it when it proved dysfunctional.

3) Notably, the Boards regulating other health professions in Texas are comprised of a majority of those practicing the profession. The Board of Nursing has 9 nurses and 4 public members. The Texas Medical Board has 12 physicians and 7 public members. The Board of Pharmacy has 7 pharmacists, one pharmacy technician, and 3 public members. To maintain standards, there's a need for those with a deep understanding of a field serving on a regulatory board.

4)The Sunset Staff Review recommends elimination of the post doctoral supervised year requirement before licensure. The rationale is that this year places an unnecessary burden on candidates, requires duplication of experience, and may delay entry into the workforce. However, virtually all post doctoral fellows are employed and serving the public, not sitting on the sidelines. The Post Doctoral year offers more advanced training and experience that simply can't be obtained earlier in a training program.

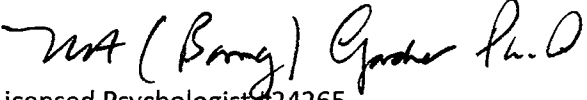
Post doctoral fellows are learning skills in neuropsychology, behavioral medicine, family therapy, and forensic assessment, among others. The post doctoral year is a way for trainees to enter the workforce sooner because they are paid less than a more experienced psychologist. The year requires more responsibility but still offers supervision, which protects the public. It is similar to a medical residency year.

For example, my university program offered little training in child work. I sought out a post doctoral supervised year at Dallas Child Guidance Clinic. Without this training I would not have been comfortable

working with children with severe emotional trauma, family problems, and developmental delays. We saw mainly Family and Protective Services children in state conservatorship and foster children. I was paid reasonably for my work there. Overall all, the post doctoral supervised year is a quality control mechanism that ensures that psychologists are prepared to serve the public safely.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

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