

Robert McLaughlin

Sunset Advisory Commission

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Testimony regarding the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists

Robert J. McLaughlin, Ph.D., License #22879, Houston, Texas

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Commission:

I am Robert McLaughlin, a psychologist licensed in Texas since 1984, Certified Group Psychotherapist, and Licensed Sex Offender Treatment Provider. I am honored to serve the citizens of Texas as regulated by the TSBEP to fulfil my professional obligations. At Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, I am Dean of the School of Allied Health Sciences, but today I speak on my own behalf and I do not represent the institution.

I educate healthcare professionals that Texas boards regulate; I respect the necessity and the limitations of regulatory processes. One way TSBEP helps is to ensure high-level competencies in an extremely high-stakes profession. Regarding **Issue #2** in the staff report, therefore, I endorse that TSBEP continue to require one year of postdoctoral training. University instruction alone cannot prepare professionals for this complex independent practice. As physicians require post-graduate residencies, psychologists require this year of post-doctoral seasoning. Texas citizens deserve it.

Regarding **issue #4**, psychology requires the special body of knowledge and experience of an independent board, and the guidance and oversight of a dedicated staff, due to its unique areas of advanced practice.

- In medical settings, psychologists bear keen responsibility to diagnose severe mental illness, and to design, conduct, and evaluate treatments for complex psychiatric co-morbidities. Physicians in my settings consult psychologists about complicated psychiatric diagnostic and treatment decisions that fall uniquely in the scope of doctorally-trained psychologists.
- Civil and criminal courts in Texas entrust doctoral-level psychologists to bring clarity to cases of contested child custody, compromised cognitive processes, and criminal behavior: each has profound implications for vulnerable citizens.

With humility, I note that TSBEP twice processed complaints against me. The complaints were from an accused and a convicted sex offender regarding my work with and testimony regarding their children and grandchildren. The cases involved incest allegations, custody and visitation disputes, severe legal repercussions, and crippling emotional outcomes that I was suited to address. TSBEP staff were respectful to the complainants, thorough, and effectively attuned to the unique psychological approaches to these cases. While humbling to me until resolution, the process was a great service to the State.

Texas needs the continued level of scrutiny and efficiency of the **independent TSBEP board with a dedicated staff** to assure that your constituents will obtain competent, regulated care at the highest level of expertise, as demanded of licensed psychologists.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I welcome your questions.