

**From:** [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)  
**To:** [Janet Wood](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Texas Sunset Advisory Commission Staff Report – Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 30, 2016 12:57:22 PM

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**From:** Michele Slaton **On Behalf Of** Robert Nichols  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 30, 2016 12:32 PM  
**To:** Sunset Advisory Commission  
**Subject:** FW: Texas Sunset Advisory Commission Staff Report – Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists

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**From:** Sunita Stewart [<mailto:Sunita.Stewart@UTSouthwestern.edu>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 30, 2016 12:02 PM  
**To:** Robert Nichols  
**Subject:** Texas Sunset Advisory Commission Staff Report – Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists

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**From:** Sunita Stewart  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 30, 2016 11:59 AM  
**To:** 'Juan.hinojosa@senate.tex.gov'  
**Subject:** RE: Texas Sunset Advisory Commission Staff Report – Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists

Sir:

I am a licensed psychologist in the state of Texas. I urge you to consider the following concerns as you prepare for the December 8<sup>th</sup> Sunset Commission hearing regarding the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists (TSBEP). I would like to provide comments on some aspects of the Sunset Advisory Commission's staff report, namely:

1. The Board's Oral Examination is an Unnecessary Requirement for Licensure
2. Requiring a Year of Post-Doctoral Supervision is an Unnecessary Hurdle to Licensure, Potentially Contributing to the Mental Health Care Provider Shortage in Texas
4. Texas Should Continue Regulating Psychologists, but Decisions on the Structure of the Texas State board of Examiners of Psychologists Await Further Review
5. A Recent Court Decision Opens the Door to unlicensed Practice of Psychology

I am strongly in favor of maintaining the requirement for the oral exam prior to full licensure. Psychology is a profession that requires face-to-face interaction and effective incorporation of legal and ethical standards into real-time problem solving and decision making. It is important that licensed psychologists be required to take this competency exam, as it tests a candidate's ability to interact with the public appropriately. Further, this exam allows the board to assess a candidate's understanding of their legal and ethical duties as an independently licensed health service provider, as well as their ability to apply this knowledge to patient care, before issuing a license which allows

the candidate to practice psychology without supervision.

I am strongly in favor of maintaining the requirement for a postdoctoral year of training prior to full licensure. Removal of this requirement would make it easier to get a psychology license in Texas and may address short-term issues, but this proposed change is short-sighted and would increase risk for deficient service delivery and inadequate protection of public consumers. The postdoctoral year provides training that is substantially different from pre-doctoral training with regard to the degree of both complexity and autonomy of clinical work. Additionally, the postdoctoral training year is a final opportunity for identification and remediation of any deficits in competency areas that may impact a licensee's ability to safely and independently provide services to the public. Removal of the postdoctoral standard of training would compromise psychologist training and result in independent licensure of many individuals who are not yet adequately prepared for unsupervised practice.

I am strongly opposed to the idea of moving TSBEP into a consolidated board. The psychology board is currently operating smoothly within a modest budget fully funded by license fees. Consolidating it with other agencies could have serious negative implications for the board's ability to protect the public, as a sophisticated and in-depth understanding of the rules, ethical standards, and nature of the profession of psychology are necessary in order to effectively address licensure complaints. A consolidated board would not have that depth of perspective or experience, to the detriment of the public. Many nuanced and quite different subspecialties exist within psychology; significant expertise in and familiarity with these specialized areas of practice is necessary for rule-making and application of rules so that minimal unintended consequences result from changes. A consolidated board would not have the resources to adequately account for subspecialty issues.

I agree with the recommendation that TSBEP develop a carefully crafted statutory definition of what constitutes the practice of psychology as part of the proposed changes to the Psychology Practice Act. It is important that the definition acknowledge the ability of psychologists to diagnose and treat as part of the legal scope of practice. The definition also should include mention of the ability of licensed psychologists to provide supervision of those activities enumerated in the definition.

***In summary, I am opposed to items 1 and 2 of the Sunset Advisory Commission staff report. I also am opposed to the separate staff report (released 11/15/16) recommending the consolidation of TSBEP under TDLR. I am in favor of a new definition of "psychologist" in Texas that acknowledges diagnosis as an essential component of the practice of psychology.***

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Sunset review process for the Texas psychology practice act. If you have any questions or need further information, please contact me at 214-456-8985.

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