

*Testimony submitted via email.*

Dear Honorable Members of the House Health Care Committee,

I am a licensed clinical psychologist with 20 years' experience in private practice. I strongly urge you to OPPOSE HB3355, a proposal that has failed repeatedly in Oregon and also 184 times around the country for a very good reason. It allows persons with no education or experience in biomedicine to prescribe powerful and risky drugs to persons of all ages, with all kinds of illnesses and taking all kinds of other drugs. And the risk is that their entire education would consist of taking the equivalent of 9-10 college courses online.

You may not believe what I just wrote because it is astounding, but that is the truth. And that fact is hidden from the proposals and information given to you by advocates. Also, the proponents will suggest that this bill brings to Oregon psychologists the chance to prescribe medications based on this "proper training." That is far from the truth. All psychologist in Oregon and the other 49 states have been able to prescribe medications with the same "proper training" as everyone else, such as nurse practitioners and physician assistants, as well as those who also go to medical school.

The small number of politically aggressive psychologists bent on expanding market share without too much trouble lack either the skill or the will to get the same training as nurse practitioners or physician assistants. And so this bill asks you to drastically lower the training standards for prescribing. Those standards are opposed by all medical authorities, and these proposals are opposed by the vast majority of psychologists – according to the only national survey of psychologists on this issue.

With sincere respect and humility, I ask you: Are you qualified to decide on your own to drastically lower the training standards for prescribing drugs to children, to the elderly, to pregnant women, to those with chronic illness in Oregon? And to do so over the objections of medical experts and the majority of psychologists? Or would you prefer to respect the standards already in place and upheld by medical authorities who are experts on how much training it takes? Do you wish to tell these psychologists they are free to get the same education as everyone else, without a special bill?

Two states long ago allowed this. People have been hurt. Mistakes have been made. Lawsuits have been filed. Settlements have been sealed from the public. Once they got a foot in the door, the psychologists began prescribing drugs for cardiovascular illness and pain conditions, among other things. Here in Illinois, the legislature allowed this only if the psychologists agreed to follow the education and training standards required for physician assistants. In Iowa they allowed it only if the medical board approved all of the education and training. HB3355 does not do that. It says psychologists only need about 10 college courses online to learn all the basics biology, physiology, chemistry and so forth and the advanced education on prescribing for children, people with illnesses, and so forth.

I urge you to maintain the current standards of training and reject HB3355. Anyone who wants to prescribe could already be doing it if they really wanted to get the right education, and not something online from a private psychology school.

Respectfully,

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