



February 12, 2015

Subject: Letter of Support for SB 41

To whom it may concern:

The Board of Psychologist and Psychological Associate Examiners is charged with the responsibility to protect the public from unethical, unsafe or predatory practitioners of psychology and to assure that there is a pool of qualified practitioners of psychology in the State of Alaska sufficient to meet the needs of the public. Psychology as a licensed profession in the State of Alaska was authorized by statute in the 1960's. At that time conducting background checks was expensive, time consuming and generally limited to the military, intelligence agencies and the State Department. In the intervening 50 years or so since the establishment of psychology licensure times have changed and technology has advanced. Today the psychology board finds itself as one of the few boards in the state of Alaska that does not have the statutory authority to conduct background checks on applicants and licensed practitioners of psychology. Therefore we, the psychology board support Senate Bill 41 for the following reasons:

- Background checks are standard gatekeeping practice for most professions that serve vulnerable populations. (e.g. Behavior Analysts – a far less comprehensive and more restrictive license authorized by the Alaska Legislature just last year requires background checks.)
- Passage of this law is at least revenue neutral to the state but possibly revenue positive in that detection and prevention of inappropriate practitioners saves the state money in enforcement costs as well as social costs arising from harm to members of the public.

- We have, so far, been fortunate in Alaska that to our knowledge nobody has been harmed by our inability to do these background checks. However, there are cases in other jurisdictions where unethical practitioners have been able to move from jurisdiction to jurisdiction – opening up new practices in new places, preying on the public while their past transgressions have gone unknown to the local licensing authority. Just because it has never happened here to our knowledge does not mean it never will.
- Without the authority to conduct background checks, the Board of Psychologist and Psychological Associate Examiners cannot fully carry out their mandate to protect the public.

On behalf of the Board of Psychologist and Psychological Associate Examiners, I thank you for your consideration of this matter and respectfully request that you pass Senate Bill 41.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allen Levy LPA". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping underline that loops under the entire name.

Allen L. Levy MS LPA
Board Chair