

Alaska Psychological Association
Advancing Psychology as a Science, a Profession, and as a Means for
Promoting Human Welfare in Alaska since 1963

February 14, 2015

Senator Giessel
Alaska State Capitol
Room 427
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Re: SB 41 - "An Act relating to criminal history record checks for psychologists and psychological associates.

Dear Senator Giessel,

First, we want to thank you for your interest in furthering the practice of professional psychology by introducing SB 41, "An Act relating to criminal history record checks for psychologists and psychological associates; and providing for an effective date." We are in agreement with the Board of Psychologist and Psychological Associate Examiners that there should be statutory ability to do appropriate background screening as a part of the initial licensing process. In fact, most of us were surprised such authority was not already in existence.

Our bylaws require official positions adopted by the association to be given a chance for the membership as a whole to provide feedback to the association's board. We are permitted however to take preliminary positions as a "sense of the board." Accordingly, we would like to share with you that it is the sense of the board that the intent of this legislation should be supported by our association. We hope to have Dr. Phillip Baker, our State Legislative Chair, testifying telephonically at the hearing this next week.

While supporting the underlying principle of public protection, we do have some concerns with the language of the bill as written in that it lacks specificity of procedure and limitations of its use. Perhaps some of these are issues of regulation rather than statute, but obviously the best time to look for unintended consequences is prior to final bill passage.

We look forward to engaging in further discussions with your office and in fact we have a planned legislative day in Juneau scheduled for February 26, if you are available. Our lobbyist, John Walsh, will contact your scheduler to see about setting up a meeting with you or your staff. John can also serve as a single point of contact for us in Juneau should you need that. We will continue our internal discussion and disseminate information to our members in order to facilitate a full official Alaska Psychological Association position.

We have also asked our national association, the American Psychological Association, to provide us some information on best practices related to this issue. Thank you again for your assistance to professional psychology and public protection.



The Legislative Committee
Alaska Psychological Association