

To: AK Senate Judiciary Committee

Fax #: see list

Date: March 5, 2015

FACSIMILE

Re: SB 41

Dear Senators

I am a Licensed Clinical Psychologist. I have been practicing in Alaska for 24 years. I am past President of the Alaska Psychological Association. I currently serve as the Alaska Legislative Liaison. I have been involved in the governance of the professional guild for the past 15 years. I am writing today regarding SB 41.

As a practicing health care professional I care deeply about the well being and safety of the patients I serve. I care about my profession and preserving the ability to practice according to my training and education.

I also care about my own rights to privacy and safety. I want to thank the committee for taking time to seriously look at the issues related to SB41.

A very careful balance needs to exist between the "vulnerable public" and those of us who are willing to work with emotionally disturbed & unstable people. Forgotten in some of this rhetoric is the fact that WE are the safety net for the public. This balance has worked quite well under the current licensing process for the last 52 years.

Given the fact that there are no cases of harm arising from the lack of background checks on psychologists, I would encourage the committee to carefully weigh the potential for unintended consequences of a rushed piece of legislation. I would ask that the brakes be applied so that all parties can reach a consensus regarding what is best to protect the vulnerable public.

Further, it is my hope that any regulations drafted as a result of SB 41 becoming law appropriately balance the protection of the public with the rights of practitioners and your thoughtful deliberations will help inform that process. I am aware there has been testimony by the licensing board indicating there are no plans to require background checks beyond initial licensure. Accordingly, I strongly support amending the bill by requiring fingerprinting for initial licensure only.

Respectfully,



Dr. Phillip Baker EdD

From the desk of...

Senator Lesil McGuire (Chair) Fax 465-6592
Senator John Coghill (Vice Chair) Fax 465-3258
Senator Bill Wielechowski Fax 465-6615

*Senator Costello & Mucciche
via email*

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