

[S. Rept. 1092, 90th Cong., second sess.]

DEFINING AND REGULATING THE PRACTICE OF PSYCHOLOGY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The Committee on the District of Columbia, to which was referred the bill (S. 1864), to define and regulate the practice of psychology in the District of Columbia, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon with an amendment and recommends that the bill (as amended) do pass.

The amendment, as indicated in the bill, as reported, by linetype and italic, is as follows:

Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert new language as a substitute.

PURPOSE OF THE BILL

The purpose of the bill is to provide for the protection of the public from the unqualified practice of psychology and from unprofessional conduct of persons practicing psychology in the District of Columbia by requiring all persons who offer psychological services to the public for a fee to obtain a license from the District of Columbia government.

NEED FOR THE LEGISLATION

At the present time, psychologists may practice psychology in the District of Columbia without license or regulation. Your committee has been advised that there have been incidents in which the lives and well-being of residents in the Nation's Capital have been adversely affected by fraudulent persons representing themselves as psychologists. This is happening at a time when the profession of psychology is clearly expanding and is more and more in demand by citizens of this city and elsewhere in the country. Therefore, your committee believes that the bill incorporates the appropriate and necessary steps which must be taken promptly to regulate the quality of psychological services by regulating the practice of psychology as existing law already requires the regulation of other professions within the city.

HEARING

The Subcommittee on Public Health, Education, Welfare, and Safety held a hearing on S. 1864 on August 28, 1967. The bill received the support of the District of Columbia government, the District of Columbia Psychological Association, and the American Psychological Association.

PROVISIONS OF THE BILL

The first section of the bill cites the act as the "Practice of Psychology Act."

Section 2 declares the practice of psychology to affect the public health, safety, and welfare, and to be subject to regulation and control in the public interest.

Section 3 defines terms used in the bill and provides that "the practice of psychology," as defined in the bill, shall not be construed as permitted the administration or prescription of drugs or any infringement upon the practice of medicine as defined by the Healing Arts Practice Act of the District of Columbia, as amended.

Section 4 states that psychologists are expected to assist their clients in obtaining professional help for aspects of the client's problems that fall outside the area of the psychologists' own competence; for example, that provision should be made for the diagnosis and treatment of relevant medical problems by an appropriate, qualified medical practitioner.

Section 5 requires the licensing of persons who practice psychology for a fee; exempting psychologists employed by Government agencies, academic institutions, charitable agencies, research laboratories, and business corporations. Also exempted are psychology interns and residents, and persons employed by licensed psychologists as defined in the bill.

Section 6 provides that the Commissioner shall be responsible for the issuance and renewal of licenses, authorizes him to provide for the preparation and administration of oral and written examinations, to appoint a Board of Psychologist Examiners to examine applicants for licenses, and requires the maintenance of public records respecting the granting, refusal, suspension, and revocation of licenses.