

NEED FOR LEGISLATION

The reasons for this support are simple and straightforward. At present, in the District of Columbia, anyone, no matter what his background or training or qualifications, is permitted to call himself a psychologist and to offer psychological services to the public. There is no law regulating the practice of psychology in this jurisdiction. However, there are laws defining and regulating psychology in thirty-seven of our States, including our immediate neighbors, Maryland and Virginia. There is a present and increasing danger to our citizens as this situation continues. The District of Columbia is becoming one of the few places in the nation where charlatans and unqualified practitioners may come when they are driven out of other states.

There have been incidents of charlatanism and unqualified practice in the District of Columbia. A fairly recent incident in which a totally unqualified person called himself a psychologist and offered psychological services led officials of the District of Columbia Government to inquire about the need for regulation of psychology in this city. at present, classified advertisements in newspapers contain fantastic offers and promises of psychological help and understanding for every type of human unhappiness. In the Yellow Pages of the telephone book, the listing of psychologists is a mixed bag of the qualified and the unqualified. Since psychology deals with the human personality and human behavior, unqualified and unprofessional practice can have a most detrimental effect upon the wellbeing and happiness of our children and adults. Identification of those properly trained and control of those who are not is necessary to insure the safety and welfare of the public.

SCOPE OF BILL

H.R. 10407 would allow for the identification of the qualified psychologist and would prevent the untrained person from offering psychological services. It would protect the full range of psychological services, including clinical, counseling, industrial, educational, and so on. It would not restrict other bona fide professionals from doing work of a psychological nature which is in keeping with their professional training, standards, and ethics. The law would not interfere with the activities of Government agencies or universities, because it would cover only those psychological activities which are offered directly to the public for a fee, outside of any recognized agency or institution of our society.

Such a law would not only protect the public by excluding the out-and-out quack, but it also helps by establishing standards that would exclude the marginally trained psychologist who has been refused licensure in his own state. It insures that a psychologist is well trained and experienced before he offers services to the public for a fee. In addition, the public would have some legal recourse in those cases where there may be unprofessional or unethical behavior on the part of a psychologist licensed under the law. Also, some benefit would accrue to the profession of psychology itself, in that its reputation would be protected from the unqualified and shoddy practices of those who currently masquerade as psychologists.