

Columbia, S.C., May 26, 1967.

HON. JOHN L. McMILLAN,
Congressman, Fifth District South Carolina,
House Office Building,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. McMILLAN: I am writing in support of a proposed bill for the licensing of psychologists in the District of Columbia. My reason for this support does not stem from any special interest in the District, but is based on the fact that I am chairman of a special committee writing similar legislation in the State of South Carolina, initiated by the South Carolina Psychological Association. A bill to license psychologists was recommended by the Governor's Advisory Group for Mental Health, and our present bill is being personally sponsored by Senator Earl Morris of Pickens. It has been introduced in both houses and is being considered by their appropriate committees. As I have been working for a number of years in South Carolina and in close cooperation with the American Psychological Association and other state associations, I feel some degree of responsibility for offering my support in the present situation. As I know that you are vitally concerned with the Welfare of the District of Columbia and of its residents, I felt that you would not consider my action in writing you offensive.

While I am quite sure that you are well acquainted with the general need for licensing professional persons serving the general public, for your convenience I am taking the liberty of calling to your attention a few points relating to the proposed bill.

1. An indication of a general recognition of the need for such legislation may be seen in the fact that a substantial majority of the states have already enacted similar laws, while others are rapidly moving in this same direction.

2. The demand for psychological services is very great and rapidly increasing. This situation is ideal for the multiplication of unqualified practitioners, who are exploiting the opportunity to sell their dubious services to the public. This will become a serious problem in large urban centers, of which the District of Columbia is a prime example.

3. Specialists such as clinical psychologists, school psychologists, and industrial psychologists quite frequently are employed by hospitals, clinics, school systems and consulting firms, where it is a relatively easy matter to determine training and competence. But when individuals offer their services to the general public, competence is not so readily verified unless governments assume some responsibility for the control of private practice. Where the happiness and well-being of individuals and families are involved, it becomes vital that practitioners are not only competent but regulated by well-defined ethical principles. This can be insured only where legal safeguards are established and maintained.

4. Most states having laws for the licensing of psychologists require a Ph. D. degree and an examination to determine areas of professional competence. As a rule, persons with graduate training below the doctoral level either are not licensed, or, if they are licensed, have limitations placed on their areas of practice. Typically, the person at the M.A. level is allowed to perform certain functions under supervision but does not assume full case responsibility.

5. Where no laws exist, anyone can hang out his shingle and advertise that he will help families with their psychological problems. Many such persons are outright quacks with no professional credentials. But regardless of the practitioner's education, it is important to be able to prevent unethical practices. The American Psychological Association has developed and published a Code of Ethics for Psychologists, which has become the guide for all psychologists and is always emphasized in the control of private practice by licensing boards.

I am enclosing a copy of the *Ethical Standards of Psychologists* as reprinted from the *American Psychologist* in order to give you a better understanding of some of the issues involved in protecting the public from unethical practice.

If I can be of any service to you in any way in obtaining information, do not hesitate to call on me. With best wishes.

Cordially,

M. KERSHAW WALSH, PH. D.,
Professor of Psychology, University of South Carolina, and Chairman,
Special Committee for Licensing Legislation, South Carolina Psychological Association.