

Testimony on HB 2660

“A Bill to Increase the Number of Social Workers on the Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board”

Presented to the Health and Human Services Committee
The Honorable Jim Morrison, Chair

January 30, 2006

Good afternoon Chairman Morrison and Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee. I am Dr. David Hill and I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony to the committee on behalf of the Kansas Psychological Association in opposition to HB 2660, which would increase the number of social workers on the Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board (BSRB).

We do not see how increasing the number of social workers on the BSRB will provide better protection for the public. We are not aware of situations in which having only two social workers on the BSRB has resulted in actual harm to the public or has jeopardized the safety of the public. Without evidence that the current structure has failed, this bill appears to be a solution that is looking for a problem.

Having different professions with different scopes of practices, different licensure requirements, and different levels of education and training will always present challenges when they are monitored by a multidisciplinary board such as the BSRB. If the issue that underlies this bill is one of being governed by other professions, it should be stated that while social work comprises the largest *group* of licensees, no *individual* social worker is more governed by other disciplines than any other *individual* licensee. Indeed, every group regulated by the BSRB could claim this as a problem. For example, Licensed Psychologists are the only that has a doctoral degree as the minimum level of training for licensure and psychologists operate in a very broad range of practice. Ideally, only the two doctoral level psychologists on the Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board would review complaints against licensed psychologists. However, the legislature has decided that a multidisciplinary board is the most cost effective way to do business at this time.

The Board uses an interdisciplinary approach in which the representatives of different professions collaborate to pursue investigations and make decisions. Altering the structure of the Board without clear cause may serve to distract from the Board's primary goal of protecting the public.

If there are problems with the representation of the various professions on the BSRB they should be addressed at the Board level first. Issues of equity and balance could be referred to all of the advisory committees of the BSRB. To the best of our knowledge, this has not happened. If this is not acceptable, we suggest that perhaps the matter should be referred to interim study.

In closing, we would like to state unequivocally that we oppose this bill unless or until there is evidence that to indicate that altering the composition of the Board will result in greater protection of the public and better licensure oversight for mental health professionals.

Thank you to the Committee for hearing our views.

Respectfully submitted,

David O Hill, PhD (Prairie Village)
Legislative Committee
Kansas Psychological Association
PO Box 3326
Lawrence, KS 66046
(785) 856-9572