

## TESTIMONY TO HOUSE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

I earned my master's degree in clinical psychology from Emporia State University, graduating in 1991. After several years of practice at a community mental health center in Wichita as a master's level psychologist, I wanted to get my Ph.D. to increase my knowledge and improve my skills to better serve the community. Walden University enabled me to earn a Ph.D. in clinical psychology while continuing to work in my community. I earned my doctorate in 2002 after five years of course work, internship and dissertation. I then did one year of post doctoral supervision as required by state regulations.

I then applied for licensure at the doctoral level as a Licensed Psychologist. The Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board denied me on four criteria. It should be noted that the state regulations indicate that to be licensed as a Licensed Psychologist one must have graduated from an APA (American Psychological Association) accredited program *or* meet all of 20 criteria. The Board concluded that I was deficient on four of these criteria. First, it claimed that I did not have a class in individual differences. I did in fact have a class in individual differences only it did not contain the words "individual differences" in the title. The class content was individual differences and fulfilled the description in the regulations. Second, the board claimed I did not have a year of residency, "or the equivalency" (as the regulations state). The Walden program requires travel to learning centers where the class meets for a long weekend and it has a 3 week summer session as well. The Board claimed that my hours were not equivalent despite it being more hours than KU requires in its residency definition. Third, the board claimed that Walden's clinical psychology program did not require standardized tests or measurements as an admission criterion. It failed to accept that Walden required a master's degree in psychology and that master's programs require the same standardized test (GRE) that the board evidently believes is the only acceptable one, thereby subsuming this requirement. The Board also failed to accept that obtaining a master's degree is a test in and of itself. And fourth, the board claimed that the program did not have a comprehensive exam "or the equivalent as determined by the program." The Board had the statement from Walden regarding the equivalency, yet ignored it.

I appealed the Board's decision to the District Court. It was then that the Board's prejudice towards online education became apparent. The Board made little effort to support its reasons for denying me. Instead it set out to denigrate online education in general and Walden University in particular. It provided the following false information to the court: It claimed Walden was not an accredited university when it is in fact accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, one of six regional accrediting bodies established by the US Dept. of Education and the same body that accredits all the universities in Kansas. It claimed that no Walden graduates are Licensed Psychologists in any state of the union. The fact is that Walden graduates are Licensed Psychologists in over a dozen states. It claimed that Walden did not require a master's degree for admissions and went to current information that Walden does not (because it has its own master's program now). The fact is that Walden did require a master's degree when I was admitted to the

program. Additional false information was presented as well. I was caught by surprise that a state Board would use such tactics and therefore was not able to enter evidence to the contrary. Nevertheless the Court of Appeals found in my favor on two of the four points but accepted the Board's false information on the other two.

Feeling helpless against such abuse of power, I contacted my state representative Mario Goico. He saw the injustice of my situation as well as the bigger picture: the clear benefit to Kansas if online education is fully accepted as the valid means of education that it is.

There is a shortage of health care professionals in rural Kansas, including psychologists. There are a handful of master's level psychologists in western Kansas and if they could get their advanced degree through online education, they can do so while continuing to practice in rural Kansas and improve their ability to serve the public with their doctoral degree.

Given the distances in rural Kansas, many prospective students cannot feasibly earn an advanced degree due to the demands of every day life which would not allow for the necessary commute time. Online education solves that problem. Fort Hayes State University and Kansas State University already have a number of programs by which students can earn degrees online. It would also be a boon to the military men and women stationed at Kansas military bases. Online programs from accredited universities appeal especially to the military because students can stay with one program despite being stationed at different places and even if deployed to Iraq or other "hotspots" overseas.

Other professionals, in health care and other fields, are also in short supply in rural Kansas. Eliminating the bias against online education will benefit Kansas students and thereby all Kansas citizens.

Ultimately, the Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board, as well as other state boards, finds an applicant eligible to take the licensing exam. It is passing this licensing exam that demonstrates a person's qualification to practice psychology. In psychology this exam is called the Examination for the Professional Practice of Psychology (EPPP). The EPPP is designed to test for knowledge and thereby assess competency. It is a national exam and a national standard. HB 2734 will enable the quality graduates from accredited universities to be eligible to take this exam.

Submitted by  
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