

I am writing to bring to your attention the overlooked consequences of the Bill H282: Psypact: Interstate pact. As a clinical psychologist with over 10 years of experience in Burlington, Vermont, I have worked with various agencies, the university system, and in private practice within the Vermont community.

As you know Vermont has both Doctorate and Masters psychologist that are certified by the Board of Psychological Examiners. Both distinctions complete the same training, both take the same international Doctorate exam of competency (the EPPP) and both are supervised by the board of psychological examiners rules. As has been true for decades, Masters and Doctorate psychologists are afforded the same rights and privileges as they perform the same work functions.

Vermont was a pioneer in developing the Master Psychology program housed at Saint Michaels College to attend to the mental health needs of Vermonters. Because of Vermont pioneering work, there is now unequivocal evidence that doctorate psychologists provide no better work or outcomes than their masters counterparts (also no better work than LCMHC and Clinical Social Workers).

I understand the VPA has advocated heavily for this bill. I am a member of the VPA, and believe it is important to disclose how the VPA is structured for your understanding. On the outside the VPA presents itself as an advocate for the field of psychological practitioners as a whole, and in some cases it is. However, within the VPA the doctorate psychologists have a heavy sway in the lobbying efforts of the VPA, which is why the focus of these many years only advocates for Doctorate psychologists. Additionally, Mental health Counselors, Clinical Social Workers and Clinical Nurses do not have any voting power within the VPA.

Because of this, many masters psychologists are not members of VPA and many mental health clinicians are not members either. This creates a problem with representation. Most of the mental health work done in Vermont is done by clinicians outside of the VPA or by clinicians with no voice within the VPA.

My worry is that the introduction of this bill goes against all statutes that uphold the current equity in the field by making a clear class distinction of a “good” and a “bad” psychologists which will sow division in the mental health field and erode the public’s trust. This proposed bill would allow in-state Doctorate psychologists to practice in the partnering states while barring the same privilege for Masters psychologists. It would also allow out-of-state psychologists to practice remotely within Vermont. This influx of out-of-state practitioners into Vermont could have disastrous economic impacts to the local Masters and associate mental health practitioners.

Recently, I brought this issue to the VPA, specifically questioning how and why this bill was constructed to exude Masters Psychologists. It was indicated that this bill comes from a national initiative from the APA and the VPA was following orders.

An often-overlooked fact is that most mental health providers in this state are actually small business owners. Most have a single office in which they practice, contribute to their community, pay their bills and taxes. They are the backbone of the rural network providing

most of the mental health care in the state of Vermont. Because of the solitary nature of this model, most practitioners are excluded from the broader mental health discussions in this state, where Agencies and Lobbyists have the greater voice, though the lesser responsibility.

I believe there has been no ill intent by those proposing this bill. It is easy to be seduced by the powerful messaging coming from national influencers. There has been an increasing trend these past years for large institutions to wield power from a national stage and directly affect local policies without properly considering the local impact. Our nation has been awash with the effects of marketing, media, and lobbying for some time.

I wish to reiterate the Board of Psychological Examiners warning of the negative consequences of splitting the psychological field and urge Vermont to include Masters' Psychologists in this interstate pact to honor Vermont's independence and long history of equity. Not doing so will degrade Vermont's authority and the dignity of its practitioners by creating a separate and unequal class system. This could discourage Vermont citizens from entering the field of mental health within the state and worsen a problem it is trying to fix.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this issue.

Sincerely,

Cody Thomas Rounds

PS: It is also important to note the information presented by PsyPact is intentionally misleading. Florida, for example, is listed as "legislation introduced". However, Florida has for decades been a pioneer of the most open interstate agreements in the country (One Vermont should investigate emulating), all while never joining Psypact. Committing to Psypact will put Vermont into a deeper arrangement with the heavily flawed APA Monopoly and surrenders its power needlessly to out-of-state interests.

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