

Dear Members of the House Committee on Health Care,

I am writing to express my concern and urge caution in allowing crossover of S237 , a bill that addresses psychologist prescribing.

I am a psychiatrist who has been practicing in Vermont for the past 30 plus years and have witnessed the huge increase in the inappropriate prescription of psychotropic drugs often for reasons that have nothing to do with effective treatment. The staggering increase in the prescription of antidepressants has much to do with the mass marketing of these medications through direct to consumer advertising and a belief that they are effective, benign and lacking in adverse effects. The fact that they are only slightly better than placebo in research controlled trials but are still being pervasively prescribed, often inappropriately for normal problems of living, should be of concern. Rather than expand the pool of practitioners who can prescribe these drugs, more education and critical thinking might be offered to the general public and current prescribers regarding the over prescription of these drugs and the potential harm along with more effective treatment interventions including psychotherapy (which psychologists can and do offer) and other psychosocial non medication interventions.

Further, non medically trained people should not be in a position to offer medical treatments without ensuring sufficient education. Although I do not want to see more professionals in a position to prescribe these medications, the lack of assurances of sufficient medical knowledge and training required of psychologists in this bill as it stands, is another pressing concern.

I am happy to discuss this further and provide a variety of references to support my position but am urging caution at this critical moment in the legislative process by not supporting this bill and not allowing it to cross over.

Let me know if I can provide more education and information to your committee as you consider this important issue that will have far reaching consequences.

Sincerely,

Alice Silverman MD

Past President of the Vermont Psychiatric Association

Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychiatry University of Vermont Medical Center

Private Practice, Montpelier VT

179 North St

Montpelier, VT

802 224 1144