



February 16, 2016

RE: RB 5071 – AN ACT REQUIRING CONNECTICUT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STATE AUTHORIZATION RECIPROCITY AGREEMENT REGARDING DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMS

Dear Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Willis, and Members of the Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement:

We are writing as constituents and psychologists to ask you to ***oppose* RB 5071 - AN ACT REQUIRING CONNECTICUT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STATE AUTHORIZATION RECIPROCITY AGREEMENT [SARA] REGARDING DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMS.**

Based on the National Council for SARA's website, SARA supersedes local state department of education degree requirements (state law where the institution is based dictates degree requirements), but not state licensure requirements:

<http://nc-sara.org/content/sara-and-licensed-professions#other-state-program>

As such, an on-line degree from a member program based in Idaho or West Virginia, for example, would only need to meet the educational requirements of the state in which the program is based. Connecticut's Department of Education would not have any authority or ability to regulate degree requirements or presumed quality of education. The Department of Public Health would still have authority over Connecticut licensing requirements.

In the short-term, SARA might lead to students enrolling in on-line programs, obtaining a degree, but not being able to become licensed professionals in Connecticut because the degree requirements do not satisfy our state licensure requirements. This would be a great disservice to students, both in terms of time and money, not to mention issues of quality of education.

In the long-term, we cannot rule out the possibility of disgruntled students appealing to you, the Legislature, asking for recognition of their on-line degrees for licensure purposes in Connecticut. This would further erode quality of education and training received by Connecticut psychologists and other professionals.

As educators, this is particularly concerning to us.



In addition to concerns about students being misled, if Connecticut were to participate in SARA, it would also likely have an impact on local educational programs, as some students may enroll in convenient on-line programs instead- **and these programs might not be of the same level of quality that we have come to expect in Connecticut.** Considering the scope of SARA, allowing Connecticut to join would be a disservice to students, universities, the Department of Education, and the psychology profession.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Elizabeth H. Flanagan, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Department of Psychiatry
Yale School of Medicine
elizabeth.flanagan@yale.edu
Home: Madison, CT

Allison N. Ponce, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Psychiatry
Yale School of Medicine
allison.ponce@yale.edu
Home: New Haven, CT

John Mehm, PhD
Associate Professor, Psychology Department
Director, Graduate Institute of Professional Psychology
University of Hartford