Illinois Senate to Vote on Legislation to Allow Psychologists to Prescribe Medication

Urge your Senator to Vote NO on SB 3329

Dear Illinois AACAP members:

As you know, the Illinois Senate is considering legislation to grant psychologists prescription privileges. The bill, SB 3329, passed the Senate Public Health Committee on March 7, but was not considered by the full Senate in March as expected. The deadline for the Senate to vote on SB 3329 has been extended to April 26th. Follow the steps below to contact your state Senators and urge them to vote NO. We need everyone’s help to ensure that SB 3329 does not pass!

If passed, the bill would allow psychologists to prescribe psychotropic medications to patients with mental illness, including children, without medical training. This legislation risks the safety of patients in Illinois, particularly children and adolescents.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Click here to enter your home address and find contact information for your state Senator.
- Use the talking points below to shape your message:
  - I am a child and adolescent psychiatric physician living/practicing in [NAME OF TOWN/CITY].
  - I am calling to urge you to vote NO on SB 3329, which would allow psychologists to prescribe medication without medical training.
  - Psychologists are a valuable and critical part of our state’s mental health system. However, they are NOT medical doctors and do not have the necessary training or expertise to prescribe medications, especially to children. Other professionals that have been granted prescription privileges, such as nurse practitioners, dentists, and physician assistants, all have medical training.
  - Prior to prescribing medication to anyone, especially a child, a comprehensive medical history should be obtained and a targeted medical evaluation completed. Medical training is critical when establishing a diagnosis in children and adolescents as medical and neurological disorders can mimic or complicate psychiatric disorders. Additionally, child psychiatrists, as physicians, are in a
better position to manage complicated patients with co-occurring medical and psychiatric illnesses.

- Particularly when dealing with children and adolescents, prescribing psychotropic medication is very complicated and carries great risk. Children are not little adults and their bodies metabolize medications differently. Prescribing medications for them requires the judgment of a physician, with training and qualifications in the use of these medications in this age group.

- For example, children and adolescents with severe mental illness are sometimes on more than one medication. The management of these conditions is complicated due to the need to consider the effect the medications will have on one another. Whether these are for a medical and psychiatric illness or just for a psychiatric illness, knowledge of these drug-to-drug interactions is critical to the child’s safety.

- As written, SB 3329 has no regard for the complexities and risks of prescribing to children, putting them at great risk if the legislation is passed.

- As a physician, I can tell you that SB 3329 would not improve access to high quality mental health care, and it will only compromise the safety of patients in Illinois, particularly children and adolescents.

We will continue to keep you updated as we learn more. Please feel free to contact Liz DiLauro (edilauro@aacap.org), Susan Scherer, M.D. (susan.m.scherer@gmail.com), or Sharon Hirsch, M.D. (shirsch@yoda.bsd.uchicago.edu) with any questions.

Sincerely,

Michael W. Naylor, M.D.
President, Illinois Council of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry