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Honorable Deb Matthews
Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care
80 Grosvenor St., 10th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4

Dear Minister Matthews:

Thank you for the opportunity to address the issue of prescription privileges for specially trained psychologists. I understand that this issue is currently being evaluated by the Ontario Ministry of Health.

By way of introduction, I am a retired United States Army psychiatrist who, while on active duty, was Director of Training and clinical preceptor to the ten military psychologists trained in the Department of Defense Psychopharmacology Demonstration Project. After two years of didactic course work and a clinical practicum, these psychologists were credentialed in the U.S. Armed Forces to prescribe psychotropic medications. This allowed these psychologists the opportunity to combine their psychopharmacology expertise with non-pharmacological strategies to offer a more comprehensive approach to the treatment of behavioral health problems. An extensive evidence base shows that such combined treatments offer greater efficacy than medications alone in the treatment of many frequently encountered psychiatric conditions.

The Department of Defense was interested in training psychologists to prescribe psychoactive medications to address a clinical shortage of behavioral health providers within the military who were licensed to prescribe. A similar problem exists in the civilian population in underserved populations, such as prison inmates, indigenous peoples, residents of sparsely populated and rural areas, and the urban poor. In response to this ongoing problem in the U.S., a number of university programs have been developed which offer a post-doctoral master's level degree in clinical psychopharmacology for psychologists. Many of these psychologists are now prescribing or are in the process of finalizing their clinical requirements to qualify them to do so. It is my understanding that specially trained psychologists are legislatively enabled to prescribe in the states of New Mexico and Louisiana, in any state as civilian employees of the Armed Forces, in any state as employees of the Indian Health Service, and in the United States Territory of Guam.

From the perspective of a psychiatrist who is uniquely well informed, I have found psychologists with proper training to function

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well as prescribing behavioral health providers.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my thoughts on this very important public policy issue. If I may provide clarification or further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Most sincerely,

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Distinguished Life Fellow
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