

Anna Borgerding
Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee Administrator
568 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

February 9, 2024

Dear Ms. Borgerding,

We are psychologists who currently serve as examiners for the Minnesota Judicial Branch's Psychological/Psychiatric Examiner Services Program. We are writing to request your support for increased funding for the Minnesota Judicial Branch Psychological/Psychiatric Examiner Services Program during the 2024 Legislative Session.

The Psychological/Psychiatric Examiner Services Program contracts with independent psychologists and psychiatrists to provide mental health evaluations to individuals involved in civil commitment and criminal proceedings. The program maintains a list of psychologists and psychiatrists (i.e., a Roster of Qualified Examiners) who are contracted to deliver these Constitutionally and statutorily mandated services.

In recent years, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has seen a sharp rise in the demand for examiner services. Between 2020 and 2023, the number of psychological exams in criminal cases grew by 125%, and the number of exams in civil cases grew by 158%. At the same time, the Judicial Branch is facing a shortage of qualified examiners and needs to increase its payment rates to stay competitive with the market for these services.

In order to meet the increasing need for these mandated services and ensure timely access to qualified examiners, the Minnesota Judicial Branch is seeking \$14.55 million in new funding for the Psychological/Psychiatric Examiner Services Program as part of its fiscal year 2024-2025 supplemental budget. **We strongly urge you to support this important funding request, which is vital to protecting the Constitutional rights of individuals involved in the criminal justice system in Minnesota.**

In addition to the proposed pay increase for Roster examiners, the Minnesota Judicial Branch is requesting to change the statutory definition of an examiner to include psychologists who do are approved to practice in Minnesota via PSYPACT, an interstate compact designed to facilitate the practice of telepsychology, temporary in-person, and face-to-face practice of psychology across state boundaries. This change would allow out-of-state licensed psychologists to complete psychological examinations for Minnesota courts and help meet the current demand for examiners. While the work we examiners do requires a great deal of education and training and could not be completed by mental health professionals with less expertise (e.g., master's level practitioners), there are many qualified psychologists in others states who could provide high-quality psychological services to our courts if statute allowed them to become Minnesota examiners through PSYPACT. **We strongly encourage you to support this change to statute, which will also help protect the Constitutional rights of defendants and respondents who require psychological evaluations through Minnesota courts.**

Thank you for your time, your consideration of this request, and your service in the Legislature. Please let us know if you have any questions about the work of forensic examiners in our state's court systems. We would be happy to provide more information about our experiences, the work we do, and our perspectives on the challenges the examiner program faces. You can also visit www.mncourts.gov/Help-Topics/Psychological-Services-Examiner.aspx to learn more about the Psychological/Psychiatric Examiner Services Program.

Sincerely,

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