PA COALITION OF STUDENT SERVICES ASSOCIATIONS

REQUEST TO REVERSE THE DECISION TO SUNSET PCOM'S SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM

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Dear Dr. Veit, Dr. Pickron-Davis, and Dr. Collins:

We are writing to urge you to immediately reconsider the decision to sunset the School Psychology Educational Specialist (Ed.S.) Program at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM). The sudden announcement that the Ed.S. program will no longer admit students comes at a time when our children and youth face unprecedented mental health challenges. Given PCOM's institutional mission to educate health professionals who care for the whole person and serve diverse communities, eliminating a program that prepares essential, front-line school-based mental health providers is a step in the wrong direction for the college, the surrounding region, and for Pennsylvania.

This closure directly worsens an already dire shortage of qualified school psychologists locally and nationally. In Pennsylvania, there is a serious shortage of school psychologists. It is a role that is federally mandated in schools, yet the Pennsylvania Dept of Education includes school psychologists in its list of 3,300 high-need vacancies across the state for the 2025-2026 school year (PDE, December 2025). The need to staff these crucial roles is so great, that two state agencies have started grant initiatives to local school districts to pay intern stipends, and are looking at ways to increase the workforce of school psychologists.

As one of only two NASP-accredited Ed.S. programs in Philadelphia, PCOM has provided roughly 100 school psychology interns to area districts since 2019, with many graduates remaining to serve the School District of Philadelphia and neighboring high-need communities. In fact, PCOM's Ed.S. graduates make up a large number of the school psychologist workforce for the The School District of Philadelphia, the largest district in the state, which serves a primarily economically marginalized population.

Sunsetting this vital program will severely undermine the regional mental health workforce when demand is at its peak. School psychologists are a primary access point for youth mental health support, crisis intervention, and suicide prevention, which are critical services for the one in five students facing mental health disorders, most of whom currently go untreated. Shutting down this high-quality program deprives vulnerable children of the critical care they deserve and undermines PCOM's longstanding legacy of leadership in community health.

The stated mission of the PCOM is: "*Educating health professionals to care for the whole person and advance the health of diverse communities*." PCOM-trained school psychologists are perfectly positioned to be first-line responders for child mental health. Shutting the pipeline to a needed workforce in the City of Philadelphia would impact residents of the city and beyond, and would seem counterintuitive to PCOM's values and commitment to serving diverse communities.

Again, we strongly request you reverse the decision to close the PCOM School Psychology program so that it can continue to admit and train master's level school psychologists.

Sincerely,

Ronnie Mitchell, President-Elect, Advocacy Chair, Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania
Jessica Dirsmith, Past President, Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania
Dr. David Lillenstein, School Psych President, Pennsylvania State Education Association Department of Pupil Services
Emilia Mattucci, Executive Director, Pennsylvania School Counselors Association
Dr. Adam Oldham, Government Relations Chair, Pennsylvania School Counselors Association
Eileen Wallace, Board Director, Association of Pennsylvania Professional School Nurses
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Dr. Doug Arnold, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Association of Pupil Services Administrators
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Carolyn Welshonce, CEO and President, Pennsylvania Association of Student Assistance Professionals