



July 6, 2017

Governor Jerry Brown
c/o State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 1456 - Low. Professional Licensure

Dear Governor Brown,

My name is Dr. Tristin Engels and I am a Clinical Forensic Psychologist. I have been employed at The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation since September 8, 2014. Since 2011, I have actively worked in the forensic field with a dedication to finding ways to reduce recidivism. I've worked with the LAPD, the Juvenile Justice system, Parole Readiness, Veterans in SASCA, and AB109 Probation before starting my employment with CDCR. I dedicated my life to reducing recidivism after following in the footsteps of my hero, my late grandfather Louis R. Vitullo, who was a Chicago Police officer and Forensic expert credited for inventing the sexual assault kit in the late 1970s. He was the only other person in my immediate family who, at that time, completed college and went on to obtain a master's degree. He was inspiring, and he always commented to me how he felt that incarceration alone was not a deterrent for crime. He was dismayed to see the same offenders rotate through the system even with his improvements in forensic science. After he passed in 2006, I set out to follow his path with a different angle: a focus on rehabilitation. One that I believed was the missing component in recidivism.

As I previously stated, I am just shy of three years with CDCR. On September 8, 2017 I will be terminated if I don't obtain my license before that time. It is July 1, 2017 as I write this and I have just over two months. I wanted to share my journey with you in an effort to emphasize the importance and urgency of Assembly Bill 1456.

Approximately a year into my employment with CDCR I began to have some increasing medical issues. I experienced a cluster of strange symptoms that began to affect my energy, cognition, and nervous system. During this time I was attempting to pass the first exam, the national exam, known as the Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology. It took me a few attempts, but I successfully passed the exam in 2016 after trying for over a year. On my second to last attempt to take this exam, I had a seizure during my test prompting my referral to a Neurologist.

In early January 2017, I finally was able to see a Neurologist. I was required to complete an inpatient sleep test, ambulatory EEG testing at home, MRI exam and laboratory work. Concerns

regarding my medical health took precedence over my ability to study for my State exam as one could imagine. In late February my diagnosis was confirmed. I had a Developmental Venous Malformation in my Left Temporal Lobe that had formed a Cavernoma. That means, I was born with a vein that does not connect to anything in the area of my brain involved in memory consolidation and emotional regulation. As a result, my brain formed a cluster of dilated capillaries to collect the blood but, when full, the blood hemorrhages into my brain irritating surrounding tissue causing Epilepsy. When under significant stress, such as sitting for a license exam with a termination date looming in the near future, my information processing and memory recall is impaired reducing my chances of passing. It also lowers my seizure threshold which explains why I experienced a seizure during one exam. After my diagnosis, I lost my driver's license understandably due to driver safety concerns. I live over an hour from work, and without any family in California, I still managed to make it every day in large part to my wonderful fiancé and dedicated colleagues altering their lives to help mine in my time of need.

My ability to sign up for the license exams is dependent on the time it takes the Board of Psychology to process and review my eligibility. For an example, it took the Board seven months to approve me to take the first exam alone. Without this bill passing and being pushed through with urgency, on September 8, 2017, I will not only lose my livelihood but I will lose my insurance and the team of specialists I have begun to trust and work well with. There are a lot of State employees in a similar position as I, or experienced major obstacles that affected their path to licensure, and I think that it does the State a disservice to terminate dedicated employees who did not get licensed on time for reasons out of their control. Extending the time frame from three to five years would be a significant benefit to many of us for various reasons. Now you personally know mine.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for taking the time to read my statement. Thank you for your consideration of this bill, and lastly thank you for your service.

Sincere gratitude,
Dr. Tristin Engels