

My name is Dr. Geoffrey Keller. I am a psychologist, and I am here to speak in support of LD 1990, *An Act to Update the Requirements for Psychology Licensure*. I appear before you not only as a clinician, but as a husband, a new father, and someone who has deliberately chosen to build a life and career in the State of Maine.

Although my wife Natalie and I moved to Maine in July of 2023, my relationship with this state goes back a good deal further. I spent much of my childhood in Maine—tramping through its woods and streams, learning to swim, camp, and hike here, and developing a lifelong relationship with the outdoors. Maine is where I proposed to my wife, and it is where we made a conscious decision to put down roots and build our family.

The process for becoming a psychologist is like that of medical doctors – applications, essays, high stakes interviews, and at the end of it all an algorithm releases a name and location. I was thrilled when I was matched for my doctoral residency at the University of Maine at Orono's Counseling Center. It was a wonderful year for my wife and, we found community quickly—friends, colleagues, and a sense of belonging. By the end of my internship, staying in Maine was an easy decision. I wanted to continue serving here, and to deepen our commitment to our community and Maine.

In keeping with these aspirations, I worked to secure a postdoctoral fellowship and was hired by Psychology Specialists of Maine. I spent the year commuting regularly from Bangor to Brunswick to meet the demands of the position. It was not easy, but my wife and I made the choice deliberately. We wanted Maine to be home, and we had decided to start our family. It was something we had wanted for years, but that had been rendered an impossibility due to the constraints of both of our graduate programs on our finances and time. In January of 2025, in the middle of my postdoc year, we learned we were expecting our first child. We saved aggressively, planned carefully, and in June we purchased our first home.

By August, we were settled. The nursery was ready. We had fenced the yard for our dogs. I had passed the national Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology. I took the Maine jurisprudence exam on August 18th and shortly thereafter learned that I had failed by a single question.

I want to be very clear about something: I take full responsibility for that failure. I did not meet the standard on that attempt, and the standard exists for an important reason. Psychology is a profession that requires guardrails. Public protection matters. Gatekeeping matters. I do not question that.

What I did not anticipate—and what fundamentally altered the trajectory of my family's life—was learning that failing the jurisprudence exam rendered me statutorily ineligible for licensure for six months, even after passing it on a subsequent attempt.

At that moment, I had completed twelve years of education and training: four years of undergraduate study, two for my master's degree, four for my doctorate, and two years of pre- and postdoctoral supervised clinical practice. I had passed the national exam. I had secured employment. I had bought a home. In 6 weeks I would be father.

And yet, because of a rigid statutory requirement, I was unable to practice independently, earn a psychologist's income, or fully contribute to the workforce during a period when my family was financially dependent on that transition.

I later passed the jurisprudence exam with a solid margin. Nothing about my competence changed between the date I failed by one question and the date I passed. What changed was simply the calendar.

Over the past several months, I have experienced firsthand the consequences of that delay. My wife returned to work recently at part-time capacity. We have faced medical bills from a complicated delivery, a mortgage, student loan payments, and now childcare expenses. The financial strain created during this period will not disappear when licensure is granted; it will follow us for years.

I ask the committee to consider what public protection is actually achieved by this six-month waiting period. If the examination is intended to ensure competence—and the applicant subsequently demonstrates that competence—what is gained by continued ineligibility? What harm is prevented? And conversely, what harm is created?

My experience may be a single case, but it is not unique in structure. Any early-career psychologist who fails the jurisprudence exam—regardless of training, supervision, or subsequent performance—faces the same automatic penalty. This is true if they fail ANY exam—including the national exam, which is not uncommon on a first try. It is 6 long months - and this penalty is not imposed in neighboring states. It is not imposed on clinical social workers or professional counselors in Maine. It is not imposed anywhere else in New England.

During this period, I was able to become licensed in Massachusetts. When I explained that the nearest in-person jurisprudence testing site was three hours away, the requirement was waived. That flexibility exists because the Massachusetts board has discretion. The Maine Board of Examiners of Psychologists does not—because the six-month prohibition is written into statute.

That distinction matters. It places Maine at a competitive disadvantage in recruiting and retaining psychologists, particularly early-career clinicians who are deciding where to build their lives. For those not already anchored by a home or family, the rational choice may simply be to look elsewhere.

I come before you with a deep respect for the democratic process and for the rule of law. I believe in the legitimacy of regulation, in professional standards, and in the idea that laws—when they are just and necessary—deserve to be upheld. I do not take lightly the opportunity to testify here today. In fact, I feel honored to have cause to participate in this process and to speak directly to the people entrusted with shaping Maine's laws. At the same time, democracy depends not only on creating statutes, but on revisiting them. Laws that no longer serve their intended purpose, that impose harm without corresponding benefit, or that hinder rather than help the public good should be examined honestly and, when appropriate, removed. That willingness to revise is not a weakness of the system—it is one of its strengths. I believe that this amendment is one such strength in action.

I respectfully ask the committee to vote in favor of the amendment. I believe that doing so does not lower standards or weaken public protections – it simply restores discretion to the Board of Examiners of Psychologists and removes a statutory barrier that delays qualified clinicians from serving the people of Maine.

I love this state. My family has committed to it deeply—emotionally, professionally, and financially. My hope is that making these changes will allow Maine’s licensure process to reflect the values it otherwise demonstrates: fairness, pragmatism, and responsiveness to gaps in the workforce and ultimately the needs of citizens.

Thank you for your time, and for your consideration.

Dr. Geoffrey Keller, PsyD