

Date: 10 December, 2018

To: Members, Panel on Health Services

Hong Kong Legislative Council

Re: Oral Presentation - Pilot Accredited Registers Scheme for Healthcare Professionals

My name is Dr. Diane Zelman. I earned a PhD in clinical psychology from the U.S. and a postdoctoral master's degree in Psychopharmacology. I have been licensed in California for over 25 years. I have practiced independently, and I have provided hospital-based services. I have mentored the doctoral research of more than 100 postgraduate students. I am a Full Professor for the Alliant International University Clinical Psychology Program in Hong Kong, and a Clinical Associate Professor in Family and Community Medicine at the University of California San Francisco School of Medicine.

Alliant University did not require me to attend this hearing. I am here because of my high regard for our graduates, and because of my alarm that the current AR scheme threatens their professional qualifications. These students have completed a demanding, four-year program including the identical sequence of training as clinical psychologists across the United States. If they had received this training in the United States, they would be welcomed, with open arms, into the guild of clinical psychology. They would have the opportunity to earn full licensure status as independent doctoral-level practitioners for NGOs, in community mental health centers, inpatient psychiatric facilities, prisons, and schools. Here they are being required to take "remedial" training to address supposed "deficiencies" in their degree.

Many of our graduates have transitioned to clinical psychology from careers in business, education, and other health services, from a calling to serve the mental health needs of the people of Hong Kong. They completed doctoral research that reflect their awareness of profound local issues: suicide assessment, addressing caregiver burden, helping women with postpartum depression. And even after their doctorate, they commit to life-long postdoctoral certificate trainings in issues facing Hong Kong:

substance abuse, gambling, treatment of traumatic stress. They are your committed forces eager to address profound local needs, and it is most practical and sensible to let them to do the work that they have been exceedingly well-trained to do.

From my earliest days as a faculty member here I have witnessed a dismissive and exclusionary attitude on the part of leadership in the Hong Kong Psychological Society's Division of Clinical Psychology. This stance has been immutable and unresponsive to abundant evidence of the quality of other training programs. This has included unwillingness to consider other international standards for classwork sequence and university preparation for psychology training.

Of greatest concern has been a tunnel-visioned focus on a single model of supervision, in which students providing services are trained by supervisors who are literally in the same room as the trainee. This model is not used in the United States, and in fact, it is not the supervision model practiced by other mental health training programs in Hong Kong. Even yesterday, the 9th of December, Carol Falender, an internationally recognized expert on supervision of clinical psychologists, said at a training conference, that this model undermines the training of competent, reflective, and independent practitioners. The growth of clinical psychology in Hong Kong requires awareness of evidence-based supervisory models.

The protection of the public requires the articulation of standards for training and practice. I applaud the comprehensive efforts of the Affiliated Register's Scheme to accomplish this. But those tasked with the clinical psychology AR scheme, have not done their task with respect for international standards of supervision. Adopting the current AR scheme standards will deprive Hong Kong of the services of more than 100 hundred trained clinical psychologists. I implore you to place the current AR plans on hold, and to seek out independent third parties to offer an equitable set of local professional standards.