August 29, 2017

Technical Review Committee  
c/o ron.briel@nebraska.gov  
DHHS Division of Administrative Services  
301 Centennial Mall South  
P.O. Box 95026  
Lincoln, NE  68509

Dear Technical Review Committee Members,

You have read and heard the concerns and reasoning surrounding the complex issue of allowing non-medical doctoral psychology professionals a fast-track to prescribe anti-psychotic medicines in Nebraska. You are asked to judge the need, advisability and safety of the proposal put forth in this nationally organized political initiative to expand the practice scope of psychologists. Your role is vital to inform our legislature and citizens.

Arguments for allowing this experiment to go ahead include: 1) a perception of lack of personnel to competently provide and oversee administering antipsychotic medicines in rural areas, that 2) doctoral-level providers without science backgrounds or medical training can achieve the necessary competency through an introductory "masters-level" on-line focused bio-sciences course and a relatively short period of clinical supervision, and that 3) few problems have been reported.

Arguments for continuing to observe include: 1) this experiment is being carried out in only a small handful of states and it is premature to bring it to Nebraska, 2) prescribing medication is practicing medicine, and broad training and experience practicing medicine cannot be achieved in an abbreviated course of study and supervision, 3) it is an unprecedented conflict of interest in medicine to allow a member-supported professional association to accredit and oversee those members, 4) the especially vulnerable geriatric and pediatric populations need more careful medical oversight than this proposal provides. Powerful anti-psychotic medications affect every part of a person’s mind and body.

Along with others, we support expanding already existing telehealth processes to serve rural Nebraskans. Psychologists cluster in urban areas just as psychiatrists do, and we believe the possible benefit to rural areas has been overestimated by this initiative. However, the framework for integrating telemedicine into a team-based approach is already in place.
On behalf of the members of the Metro Omaha Medical Society, I urge you to help maintain the high quality of care Nebraskans depend upon and oppose this proposal of the Nebraska Psychological Association.

Sincerely,

David J. Watts, MD
President, Metro Omaha Medical Society