



## SENATOR CHARLES SCHWERTNER, MD

SENATE DISTRICT 5

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Schwertner Unveils Plan to Recruit Psychiatrists to Texas**

*Hoping to increase mental and behavioral health resources this session, Schwertner files legislation allowing out-of-state psychiatrists to more easily treat Texas patients.*

**AUSTIN, TX** -- Today, Senator Charles Schwertner (R-Georgetown) filed SB 674, legislation requiring the Texas Medical Board (TMB) to create an expedited licensure process that would allow out-of-state psychiatrists to treat Texas patients in need of care. Currently, Texas is one of only eight states to offer no reciprocal licensure for out-of-state physicians.

"The sad truth is, the majority of Texas counties are already woefully underserved when it comes to mental health services," said Schwertner. "Unless we can expand our mental health workforce, we risk worsening an already serious behavioral health crisis in Texas."

According to a 2013 Department of State Health Services (DSHS) study, 207 of Texas' 254 counties have been designated as Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas, meaning they have fewer than one mental health clinician per 30,000 individuals. Texas currently has only 1,460 licensed psychiatrists available to treat a state of nearly 27 million residents.

Further complicating matters is the fact that 532 of these psychiatrists are nearing retirement age (55 years or older), while experts stress that Texas needs at least 1,000 additional adult psychiatrists and 200 child psychiatrists just to meet current needs.

"If there are psychiatrists out there willing to move to Texas, we should make that process as easy as possible," continued Schwertner. "I think we owe it to the people of Texas to meet this challenge head on and do everything we can to train, or in this case recruit, an adequate number of psychiatrists to serve our state's growing mental health needs."

In order to qualify for the expedited licensure process, a psychiatrist must hold a full and unrestricted medical license issued by another state, as well as a current certification in psychiatry by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology or the American Osteopathic Board of Neurology and Psychiatry. Applicants must also have a clean disciplinary record from their respective state licensing authority and may not be under active investigation by any state, federal, or foreign law enforcement authority.

"We have always maintained a positive, pro-active attitude when it comes to recruiting out-of-state businesses to come to Texas," continued Schwertner. "It would be foolish not to consider a similar strategy when it comes to addressing the critical long-term shortfall in our state's mental health workforce."

A medical doctor by training, Dr. Schwertner serves as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services. Schwertner is currently serving his third term as the senator for Senate District 5, a ten-county region of central and east Texas.

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