May 18, 2017

Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 12428  
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

Dear Governor Abbott,

On behalf of our more than 3,000 members, of various backgrounds, ethnicities and political beliefs, we write to express our profound disappointment regarding the enactment of S.B.4. We join with the large, and growing, chorus of organizations, community leaders, and advocates such as The Leadership Conference on Civil Human Rights, the Anti-defamation League, NAACP, and the National Association of Social Workers, and nearly all the sheriffs in major Texas cities, in calling this law unwise and discriminatory.

As amended, S.B.4 will perpetuate racial profiling and xenophobia towards individuals who are perceived to be undocumented immigrants, even if they are U.S. citizens. It will undermine community policing efforts by making immigrant and Latino residents fearful to report crimes or otherwise cooperate with police out of anxiety that they will themselves be targeted. And, similar to an analogous bill passed in Arizona, this bill will negatively impact the Texas economy. As mental health professionals, we would be remiss if we didn't emphasize that this bill will harm the well-being of all Texas residents, but especially immigrant children regardless of their status in the U.S.

Studies show that discrimination has many adverse psychological consequences and can lead to traumatic and anxiety disorders, depression, and substance misuse and abuse. Additionally, laws such as S.B.4 can negatively affect child and adolescent development, causing behavioral disorders. Discriminatory laws also raise the risk of increasing prejudice, hate crimes, bullying and violence towards those who are viewed as “other”, furthering traumatic outcomes.

On Friday, June 9, during the American Psychoanalytic Association’s Annual Meeting in Austin, there will be two programs offering a deeper, psychoanalytic perspective on how race, discrimination and “otherness” impacts one’s mental well-being. Opening our scientific program will be a town hall discussion titled Race and Borders: Crisis in Contemporary American Identity. Later that afternoon, psychoanalysts and three renowned historians will come together to discuss the Mexican-American border in a panel presentation titled The Mexico-Texas Borderland: How it’s been, How it should be.
Please consider this letter a personal invitation to attend either or both programs. We surely hope those two programs and our presence in Austin will help shed important light on the dangers of this law. In the meantime, we hope our outrage over this harmful legislation, and the concerns raised by hundreds of other organizations, will spur immediate steps to rescind this law before it goes into effect in September. This law will not just negatively impact immigrants and other minorities, but it will hurt all Texans.

Kindly,

Harriet Wolfe, M.D.
President

Lee Jaffe, Ph.D.
President-elect

Race and Borders: Crisis in Contemporary American Identity will be held on Friday, June 9 in Salon A-B (4th FL) of the Austin Hilton from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

The Mexico-Texas Borderland: How It's Been, How It Should Be will be held on Friday, June 9 in Salon D (4th FL) of the Austin Hilton from 3:30 pm to 6:00 pm.

If interested in attending the Annual Meeting at the Austin Hilton Hotel (500 East 4th Street) on June 9th, please contact Wylie Tene, Director of Public Affairs, at 212-752-0450, Ext. 29 or wtene@apsa.org.