As a school psychologist, I would like to express my support for the proposal to expand the staff category used for the Common Core of Data to include the category of “school psychologist.” School psychologists provide critical services that support the academic, social-emotional, and mental and behavioral health of students. They are also key members of teams that help ensure all schools are safe for all students. [INSERT ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE SERVICES SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS PROVIDE]

Currently, school psychologists are included in the definition of ‘student support staff’ which includes attendance officers, coaches, and other staff providing health or social services, among others. Inclusion. This makes it difficult to get an accurate count of the number of school psychologists employed in schools as each state collects data on FTE school psychologists differently, or not at all. Washington state does not collect data on the number of school psychologist’s working in the state at a given time, making it difficult to assess the shortage being experienced in our field.

In light of recent conversations around school safety and the need for increased access to mental health professionals, the lack of accurate data on the number of school psychologists has impeded our ability to determine where resources are needed. These data would help craft policy solutions and implement targeted efforts to increase access to school psychologists in states that need it the most. Adding this data point to the Common Core of Data would allow us to make more informed strategic decisions.

Expanding the staffing category of the Common Core of Data to include ‘school psychologist’ would not constitute a significant burden on the state department of education and would provide valuable information to help key decision makers and interested stakeholders in our state and across the country ensure adequate and equitable access to school psychological services. The National Association of School Psychologists recommends a ratio of one school psychologist for every 500-700 students. Yet, without consistent and accurate data about the number of school psychologists, we are not able to identify key staffing trends over time; identify reductions/gaps in services or access to services; or potentially reveal inequitable access to school psychologists. Including “school psychologist’ in the staffing category of the Common Core of Data would help meet this need and serve as a valuable data point for states to develop effective recruitment and retention strategies and ensure adequate access to school psychological services.

[INSERT ADDITIONAL REASONS YOU BELIEVE FEDERAL DATA COLLECTION ABOUT SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS IS NECESSARY]

I understand that the US Department of Education will ultimately determine the definition of “school psychologist.” However, I would like to propose the following definition: ‘school psychologist’ means an individual working in a PK-12 educational setting, providing psychological services under the job title ‘school psychologist’ (or Licensed Specialist in School Psychology in Texas, or School Psychology Specialist in Arkansas).

I support the proposed inclusion of “school psychologist” in the Common Core of Data and urge NCES to consider inclusion of this important information.