

TO: The Honorable Clarence K. Lam

FROM: Carolyn Applegate, MGC, CGC
Department of Genetic Medicine
McKusick – Nathans Institute

DATE: February 26, 2020

On behalf of Johns Hopkins University and Medicine, thank you for the opportunity to support **SB 0763 State Board of Physicians – Genetic Counselors – Licensing**. This is a very detailed bill that would bring the state of Maryland in line with 26 other states that have statutes permitting licensed genetic counselor to practice their profession.

I am the genetic counselor manager in the Department of Genetic Medicine at Johns Hopkins University. I am also representing my genetic counseling colleagues as the immediate past-chair of the public policy committee of the Maryland and DC Society of Genetic Counselors. Maryland genetic counselors unanimously support this bill.

In Maryland, genetic counselors can now practice in limited circumstances, but the field of medical genetics is expanding very rapidly and more genetic counselors are needed in clinical situations beyond tertiary care centers.

MIMIMUM EDUCATION REQUIREMENT

Licensure will assure that minimum education, continuing education, and certification standards have been met by individuals using the title of genetic counselor. It allows identification of providers and protects consumers from receiving genetic information from those who are not. The baseline education and continuing education requirements are important in the field of genetics as this is one of the most rapidly changing fields in medicine with more than 10 new tests being added to the market every day.

ACCOUNTIBILITY

This bill ensures accountability of providers by adding an investigative process of complaints and disciplinary action. This also ensures that consumers receiving medical care in Maryland receive the same quality of care as they would receive in neighboring states where licensure exists.

ACCESSIBILITY

The majority of individuals seeking genetic counseling travel to major medical centers to receive services which limits ease of access to those citizen residing in Western Maryland and on the Eastern Shore. Licensing of genetic counselors necessary to provide telemedicine services in Maryland thereby increasing access to all citizens.

RETAIN THE BEST PROFESSIONALS

Licensure ensures that the State of Maryland is working to attract and retain genetic counselors. Maryland is the home to two nationally recognized genetic counseling graduate programs of excellence. This bill will help to retain and recruit highly qualified genetic counselors at a time when there is a nationwide shortage

HEALTH CARE SAVINGS

The bill will result in cost savings of healthcare dollars via identification of accurate testing on appropriate individuals. Studies show that healthcare providers without training in genetics often order more expensive genetic testing than is medically indicated, amounting to unnecessary health care expenditures. A number of studies suggest that 30% of genetic tests ordered by providers without specialized training are inappropriate.

It is past time that Maryland, home of some of the greatest genetics research and clinical care in the world from Hopkins, the University of Maryland and the NIH, has statutes in place to permit highly educated, licensed and Board-certified genetic counselors to provide services to the thousands of patients that need them.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report on SB0763.

Sincerely,



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Johns Hopkins University, School of Medicine