



# Maryland CHAPTER

Maryland Chapter  
American College of Cardiology

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February 24, 2020

Delegate Shane Pendergrass, Chair  
Health and Government Operations Committee  
Room 241 House Office Building  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

## **RE: SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 1040 Genetic Counselors - Licensing**

**The Maryland Chapter of the American College of Cardiology** supports initiatives that improve access to quality healthcare services, including genetic counseling services, in the State of Maryland. Currently, Maryland does not legally specify who may use the title of “genetic counselor.” Licensure for genetic counselors is an important mechanism the help consumers identify appropriately qualified genetic counseling providers. We support the Maryland and DC Society of Genetic Counselors (MDCGC) efforts to secure licensure for genetic counselors in Maryland as means toward this end, specifically House Bill HB1040.

The rapid growth of medical genetics has affected virtually all areas of medicine. This specialized expertise aides physicians, patients, and families by providing a significant role in education surrounding the genetic contributions to disease and the implications for an individual’s health – both medical and psychological – and the health of family members. Genetic counselors empower clinicians and patients by providing genetic services and interpretation, which is vital in the goal of precision medicine.

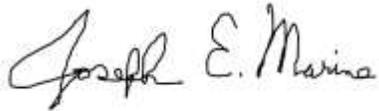
Genetic counselors are Master’s-trained healthcare professionals who provide clients with information, education, counseling, advocacy, and emotional support for medical conditions that have genetic indications. They are key members in several of our clinical care teams with physician and allied professional members of the **Maryland Chapter of the American College of Cardiology**. Licensure for genetic counselors is essential to ensuring that genetic counselors are appropriately trained and credentialed so that patients and clients receive proper information and care. Licensure of genetic counselors additionally serves as a protection to prevent individuals with inadequate training from clinical practice in genetic counseling.

Licensure would strengthen the collaborative relationship of genetic counselors and treating physicians insofar as they will be working within a multidisciplinary setting and improving access and timeliness to genetic information. As genomics is increasingly becoming a vital part of patient care, integration of genetic counselors into clinical care will be vital, especially in cardiology. From current data, one out of 250 individuals has a hereditary cardiac risk, and could benefit from genetic counseling services.

Absence of licensure for these highly trained professionals--our genetic counselors-- will restrict provision of needed clinical genetics services to patients; a need that is ever-increasing in medicine today.

For these reasons, we respectfully ask that the Committee support legislation for genetic counselor licensure in Maryland by recommending favorably HB1040.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph E. Marine". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J".

Joseph E. Marine, MD, FACC  
President