

Testimony of Jennifer Schwab, MS, CGC
Genetic Counselor and Resident of East Greenwich, RI
Before the Rhode Island House Corporations Committee
In support of House Bill No. 6643 (LC003344) GENETIC COUNSELORS LICENSING ACT

Representatives Solomon, O'Brien, Caldwell, and Esteemed Members of the House Corporations Committee,

My name is Jenn Schwab. I am a Resident of East Greenwich, RI and a genetic counselor. I have been practicing in Rhode Island for 9 years.

I want to thank Representative McEntee, Ruggiero, Kazarian, Caldwell, and Craven for introducing *AN ACT RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS – GENETIC COUNSELORS LICENSING ACT {LC003344}*. I also want to thank Tracey Kehoe, an advocate and cancer survivor, for all of her efforts to support this important legislation.

I recognize that we are talking about Licensure for Genetic Counselors and people present today may not be familiar with who genetic counselors are or the kind of care that we provide

Genetic Counselors are healthcare providers who earn a graduate degree in Genetic Counseling from 1 of 50 accredited Master degree programs in the country. We study a combination of science and psychosocial counseling theory. Through my education I studied:

- Genetic contribution to human disease
- How genetic mutations can cause a condition or put someone at risk to develop health problems
- Inheritance patterns, recognizing how genetic mutations can be inherited in a family or how they can occur brand new in an individual
- Recognize the signs to look for in a personal and family health history to determine if there is an increased risk for a genetic condition
- Understand and stay up to date on the technology behind the genetic testing options used to confirm, or rule out, a hereditary condition

But more than that I am trained to recognize and address the human side of this science by:

- Explaining these complex topics in a way that my patients can understand regardless of their age, culture, education, or cognitive abilities
- Outline information and testing options in a balanced and unbiased way while supporting families through their diagnostic odysseys
- Support individuals and families as they adjust to a new normal following a diagnosis and help them navigate their next steps to receive continued care, often educating other healthcare providers who care for my patients on the genetics behind their diagnosis

Since most other healthcare providers only receive minimal genetics education and genetics is rapidly becoming a major part of healthcare, I find that I am called to explain genetic testing results and

diagnoses to other healthcare providers, including physicians, and my education has fostered the skills to do this successfully.

I am board certified by the American Board of Genetic Counselors. After completing my 2 year master's degree, I passed my board exam and I recertify every 5 years by maintaining my continuing education requirements.

Clinicians and patients need to know that the genetic counselors that they work with are adequately trained and up-to-date on medical genetics. Issuing Licensure would establish requirements and implement minimum standards for individuals regarding academic achievement, clinical experience, and skills necessary to deliver high quality genetic counseling services.

Currently, our state has no legal standard for those who can identify themselves as genetic counselors; therefore anyone can label himself a genetic counselor even if they have absolutely no training, putting the quality of care Rhode Island patients are receiving at risk.

Issuing Genetic Counseling Licensure in Rhode Island is long overdue. I fully support H6643 and I thank Chairman Solomon, Vice Chairman O'Brien, Second Vice Chairwoman Caldwell, and the committee for your attention to this important issue. I am available as a resource for future discussions of this Bill.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Schwab, MS, CGC
1484 Middle Road, East Greenwich, RI 02818
401-782-5053
jenschwab401@gmail.com