

6/24/2021

Dear Members of House Committee on Corporation members,

I am writing to offer my support for H5147 – Genetic Counselor Licensing Act **with amendments**.

My name is Chanika Phornphutkul and I am a board certified by American Board of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ABMGG) Clinical Biochemical Geneticist. This is a personal letter, not representing the views or opinions of my employer.

I have been a licensed physician in Rhode Island for over 20 years providing care for patients with concerns for genetic conditions and have worked with many talented genetic counselors over the years. I also have encountered under qualified genetic counselors just like any professionals including physicians. Our state licensing body has shown us time over time of how to hold the practitioner accountable, for which I am proud to be a licensed physician in the state of Rhode Island.

For genetic counselors, a master level training, their scope of training is outlined by professional society, American Board of Genetic Counseling (ABGC). Upon finishing their training, they can complete the process of examination, receiving board certification and then apply for licensure at the site of practice.

Licensure is an important aspect of state regulation to ensure the genetic counselors have achieved competency after **proper training**, **board certification** and **maintenance of certification** via ongoing education for the patient care and safety. The state licensure relies on ABGC or ABMGG to set the standard for the profession. The state licensing body holds us practitioners at the highest standard above and beyond the certification. Licensure can be revoked when the practitioners do not meet the standard of care.

I do think it is important to point out the amendment that is needed to make this Act best suited for Rhode Islanders. To ensure the highest quality of care and garner my full support.

Page 4, line 34. This proposed bill allows granting licensure for non-board-certified genetic counselors who have been in practice for 8 years or more defeats the above emphasis on the importance of quality of care/ training and ultimately licensure. This loop hole will allow genetic counselors trainees who did not meet the criteria for finishing the training, did not pass the board, chose not to take the exam or received training from non-accredited genetic counseling training programs by ABGC to easily obtain practicing licensure in RI as a safe heaven. Upon reviewing RI licensure for practitioners, the state of Rhode Island has not written this clause in any of the professional licensures including physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants and dieticians. It is unclear to me why this clause is added to this proposed bill. This clause should be removed to ensure consistency among all RI practitioner licensures.

I recommend removing sub (3) Page 4, line 34 to Page 5 line 7 from this proposed bill.

The ultimate goal of genetic counselor licensing act is to ensure that the practitioners are held to the highest standard for the safety and care of patients in the state of Rhode Island. For these reasons, I respectfully ask that the Committee consider championing legislation for genetic counselor licensure in Rhode Island by favorably supporting H5147 with amendments.

Sincerely,

Chanika Phornphutkul ,MD RI License MD10121