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Honorable Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee,

I am the co-founder and co-president of the Rhode Island Association of Aesthetic Providers (RIAAP), and I own Inspire Medical Spa and Wellness Center in Narragansett. I wish to express my strong support for Bill H5351, which upholds the right of all medical aesthetic providers to practice and delegate to the full extent of their scope of practice.

In 2014, I took a significant leap of faith, investing most of my retirement savings to open Inspire Medical Spa. As a registered nurse at the time, I had worked tirelessly—60 to 70-hour weeks—for over two years to establish my business when a bill was introduced proposing that I would need to pay a physician to be on-site in order for me to operate any laser or energy-based device. This mandate would have forced me out of business.

Fortunately, with the support of Former Speaker William Murphy and Senate President Ruggerio, both of whom visited my establishment, we were able to demonstrate that the bill was unnecessary and served the interests of only a few dermatologists aiming to monopolize aesthetic medicine under the guise of safety. Their intervention not only saved my business but preserved the entire aesthetic specialty in Rhode Island—an industry that employs hundreds of individuals, contributes to the state budget, supports primary care, and enhances the health and happiness of our community.

These recurring legislative and regulatory attacks on the scope of practice of non-physician medical aesthetic providers predominantly stem from a small group of dermatologists. Most dermatologists, however, value collaboration with NPs. For example, I frequently collaborate with respected dermatologists like Dr. Solis in Westerly, who often refers patients to me. The majority of dermatologists also appreciate the value of teamwork with PAs, RNs, and aestheticians and how delegation enhances patient care and decreases costs without compromising safety. No physician would find it cost-effective nor time-worthy to perform routine procedures such as laser hair removal, broad band light, and radiofrequency microneedling. Such restrictions would drive up costs, forcing patients to seek care in neighboring states. For these reasons, we have physicians joining RIAAP.

Over the years, we have sought dialogue with this small group of dermatologists, the Rhode Island Board of Nursing (RIBON), and the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH),

emphasizing that we agree patient safety is paramount. We have proposed multiple solutions including the formation of a medical aesthetic advisory committee comprised of aesthetic providers from diverse educational backgrounds to establish safety protocols and standards of care. On every occasion, we have been ignored. Hence the most recent guidelines that prove our DOH does not understand medical aesthetics and is actually making the specialty more dangerous---the perfect example being the guideline that states it is within the pharmacists' scope of practice to inject toxins and fillers. Pharmacists agree this is not within their scope of practice.

As co-founder and co-president of the Rhode Island Association of Aesthetic Providers, I represent a diverse membership, including dermatologists, plastic surgeons, NPs, PAs, RNs, orthodontists, dentists, and aestheticians. Our fledgling organization is already offering continuing education units (CEUs) and aspires to create an institute dedicated to developing protocols, standards of care, and certifications in aesthetic medicine. As a small state, Rhode Island is uniquely positioned to lead the nation in establishing such an institute, attracting professionals nationwide to learn and become certified. It makes sense that the RIDOH would wish to support this endeavor.

These yearly attacks on non-physician scopes of practice consistently utilize scare tactics. Yet, medical aesthetics is inherently safe, with no publicly disciplined reported adverse events in Rhode Island. According to the *American Society of Plastic Surgeons*, the overall complication rate for aesthetic procedures remains low, with most adverse events being minor and manageable. A 2017 study published in *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery* reported the rate of serious complications from non-invasive aesthetic procedures, such as laser hair removal and chemical peels, is less than 1%. Furthermore, since 2017, technology and techniques have continued to evolve and advance, enhancing both safety and patient outcomes. The 2023 American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) Procedural Statistics Release reports that over 25 million minimally invasive procedures a year are performed in America. With such high volume, we would be inundated with patient complaints throughout the nation if adverse events were common.

Bill H5351 is not seeking expansion of scope but to preserve and solidify what is legally already the scope of practice of aesthetic providers. It is inconsistent to claim that NPs, PAs, and RNs are unqualified to perform minimally invasive procedures while relying on them for more complex, higher-risk healthcare tasks in other settings. For example, according to the RI Board of Nursing, an RN is not allowed to inject fillers but may administer chemotherapy through a central line. We must trust our medical professionals to recognize their personal, individual scope of practice and seek appropriate education and training.

We are in a healthcare crisis in which people are unable to find a primary care provider. Medical aesthetic providers support primary care by screening for disease such as skin cancer, high blood pressure, and mental health concerns, as well as treating obesity, depression, migraines,

hyperhidrosis, and temporomandibular joint disorder. At a time when access to care is a priority in our state, our collaboration with other providers is crucial to the healthcare system.

Supporting Bill H5351 means supporting small businesses, mostly woman-owned, and the economic growth of Rhode Island. Medical aesthetics significantly contributes to job creation, tax revenue, and commercial real estate investments. The American Med Spa Association, "2021 State of the Industry Report" reports that the aesthetic industry is rapidly growing, with projections exceeding \$30 billion nationally this year. Restrictive regulation would hinder our state's ability to benefit from this growth.

In conclusion, I urge you to support Bill H5351. Let Rhode Island be a leader in this lucrative, fast-growing industry. Let us protect patient choice and access to care, support small businesses, and foster an environment where medical professionals can practice to the full extent of their training and expertise.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Pamela Lutes MSN, RN, APRN, FNP
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Co-founder and Co-president, Rhode Island Association of Aesthetic Provider