



April 26, 2017

The Honorable Reps. J. Anne Parks, John R. McCravy III, John Richard C. King, Michael A. Pitts, Robert L. Ridgeway III and Jason Elliott
434 D Blatt Building
1105 Pendleton Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Re: House Bill H3751

Dear Representatives Parks, McCarvy, Pitts, Ridgeway and Elliott,

I write as President of the American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ACMG). ACMG is composed of over 2,000 members, of whom nearly 1300 are diplomates certified in medical genetics by the American Board of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ABMGG). The professional expertise and responsibilities of the diplomats are in the clinical and laboratory aspects of providing medical genetic services. ACMG is generally supportive of legislation providing for licensure of trained genetic counselors. However, certain bills contain language that, for reasons of patient safety, the ACMG cannot support.

With the rapid increase in knowledge about the relationships between genetics and diseases that has developed over the past 10-20 years, the range of genetic services that are being provided to patients and to the public has greatly expanded. Moreover, these services have become increasingly more complex and require a unique combination of counseling skills and medical knowledge. Genetic services are provided by various types of health professionals, and genetic counselors have played and will continue to play a crucial role in the provision of these services. However, the scope of practice for a board-certified genetic counselor does not include the practice of medicine.

As genetic knowledge has increased, so has the need to ensure that those who are providing clinical genetic services to the public are properly trained and possess the necessary skills and knowledge. We believe that licensure will enhance the ability of genetic counselors to provide appropriate genetic counseling services to those who need them. Furthermore, licensure will protect the public from the harms that would ensue from inaccurate and inappropriate counseling that could be provided

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individuals holding themselves out to the public as genetic counselors.

Our concerns about the current South Carolina House bill are in three areas as described below.

- A) Section 40-84-20; 9(c): *identify and coordinate genetic laboratory tests and coordinate other diagnostic studies as appropriate for the genetic assessment;*

This clause authorizes genetic counselors to determine the tests needed by a patient, and to coordinate the genetic testing with other testing. ACMG believes that identification of appropriate tests based on medical and family histories are part of the practice of medicine, and are therefore the responsibility of the physician caring for the patient. Accordingly, the ACMG believes that to “*identify and coordinate genetic laboratory tests and coordinate other diagnostic studies as appropriate for the genetic assessment*” should be removed from the Bill.

- B) Section 40-84-110; (A)(2): We found the language in this section to be confusing: “has treated or undertaken to treat human ailments otherwise than by a genetic counselor”

We believe “otherwise than by a genetic counselor” should be changed to “otherwise than as a genetic counselor.”

- C) Another problematic area is Section 40-84-230:

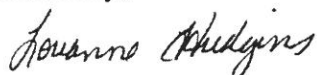
The provisions of this act do not apply to:

(4) a person licensed by the State to practice in a profession such as a physician or nurse practitioner when acting within the scope of the person’s profession and doing work of a nature consistent with the person’s training. The person cannot not hold himself out to the public as a genetic counselor.

ACMG considers that genetic counseling is within the current scope of practice of ABMGG-certified PhD medical geneticists and, accordingly, that they, too should be exempt from the provisions of this Act. Further, the ACMG believes that ABMGG-certified MDs and PhD medical geneticists are entitled to hold themselves out as genetic counselors.

The ACMG hopes that the above concerns can be addressed so that we can support this legislation that addresses an important issue in South Carolina. ACMG is available to further discuss these concerns or to provide technical assistance in refining the language in the bill.

Sincerely,



President