

January 9, 2020

The Honorable David Loebsack
U.S. House of Representatives
1211 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Kelly
U.S. House of Representatives
1707 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Sent electronically to: katie.murray@mail.house.gov; kevin.dawson@mail.house.gov

Re: H.R. 3235 – Access to Genetic Counselor Services Act of 2019

Dear Representatives Loebsack and Kelly:

The American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ACMG) is writing to express our concerns about H.R. 3235, the Access to Genetic Counselor Services Act of 2019. ACMG is the only nationally recognized professional membership organization dedicated to improving health through the practice of medical genetics and genomics. Our membership includes over 2,300 genetics professionals, nearly 80% of whom are board-certified medical geneticists and genetic counselors. The specialty of medical genetics includes clinical geneticists (MD/DO or equivalent), PhD medical geneticists (PhD), and laboratory geneticists (MD/DO or PhD or equivalent), as well as the clinical subspecialty of medical biochemical genetics (MD/DO or equivalent). These medical geneticists are board-certified by the American Board of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ABMGG), one of the 24 member boards of the American Board of Medical Specialties. Genetic counselors receive specialized training leading to a master's degree and are certified by the American Board of Genetic Counseling.

In our previous letter about H.R. 3235, ACMG noted that we support efforts to improve patient access to genetic counselors for services provided within their appropriate scope of practice. The ACMG believes that optimal patient care requires that genetic counselors work with or under the direction of a medical geneticist or other physician knowledgeable about the application of genetics and genomics information within their field. Physician-directed or jointly established protocols ensure patients receive the most accurate and up-to-date information to guide important decision making and care.

The ACMG cannot support any policies that would permit genetic counselors to practice medicine, and we have long held that the following activities constitute the practice of medicine:

- 1) Ordering medical tests; including genetic testing
- 2) Establishing a clinical diagnosis for a patient

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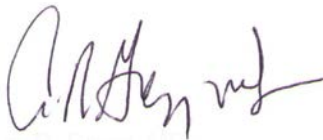
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- 3) Performing a medical examination of a patient
- 4) Medical management of a patient
- 5) Medical treatment of a patient

Genetic counselors have become licensed and authorized to carry out some of these activities without restrictions in at least seven states. Similar licensure legislation is pending in several other states. If H.R. 3235 is passed without appropriate scope of practice limitations, genetic counselors will receive reimbursement for carrying out activities that fall within the practice of medicine. For this reason, the ACMG can no longer support H.R. 3235 as currently written.

ACMG has always valued the services that genetic counselors provide and believes in appropriate reimbursement for genetic counseling services. However, we believe that H.R. 3235 and similar bills must properly define the scope of practice of genetic counselors and must clarify that counselors will not be reimbursed for engaging in the practice of medicine. As such, we would be happy to work with your offices to develop language that could be supported.

Sincerely,



Anthony R. Gregg, MD, MBA, FACOG, FACMG
President
American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics



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