

January 31, 2021

The Honorable Sheri Schouten
Oregon House of Representatives

The Honorable Nancy Nathanson
Oregon House of Representatives

The Honorable Rob Nosse
Oregon House of Representatives

The Honorable Rachel Prusak
Oregon House of Representatives

The Honorable Tawna Sanchez
Oregon House of Representatives

Re: Oregon House Bill 2619

Dear Representatives Schouten, Nathanson, Nosse, Prusak, and Sanchez:

The American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ACMG) supports establishment of genetic counselor licensure requirements and appreciates your attention to this topic. ACMG is the only nationally recognized medical professional organization solely dedicated to improving health through the practice of medical genetics and genomics, and the only medical specialty society in the US that represents the full spectrum of medical genetics disciplines in a single organization. ACMG is the largest membership organization specifically for medical geneticists, providing education, resources, and a voice for more than 2,400 clinical and laboratory geneticists, genetic counselors, and other healthcare professionals, nearly 80% of whom are board-certified in the medical genetics specialties. ACMG's mission is to improve health through the clinical and laboratory practice of medical genetics as well as through advocacy, education and clinical research, and to guide the safe and effective integration of genetics and genomics into all of medicine and healthcare, resulting in improved personal and public health.

The specialty of medical genetics includes clinical geneticists (MD/DO or equivalent), PhD medical geneticists (PhD), and laboratory geneticists (MD/DO or

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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 work as part of the medical team to facilitate communication between patients and other healthcare providers on health issues with a genetic component. They receive specialized training in counseling patients to help them understand the medical, psychological, and familial implications of genetic information and findings. After two years, this training leads to a master's degree in genetic counseling, and individuals are certified by the American Board of Genetic Counseling. However, genetic counselors are not trained to practice medicine, and we appreciate that HB 2619, as currently written, recognizes this difference.

The practice of medicine requires doctoral-level medical training followed by several years of additional specialized training. The following activities constitute the practice of medicine:

- 1) ordering medical tests, including genetic testing;
- 2) establishing a clinical diagnosis for a patient;
- 3) performing a medical examination of a patient;
- 4) medical management of a patient; and
- 5) medical treatment of a patient.

We appreciate that section 4 (2) of HB 2619 makes clear that genetic counselors are not allowed to diagnose, test for or treat a genetic or other medical condition or disease. While there are certain genetic tests that can safely be ordered by certified genetic counselor, such as those that are only used to estimate risk of developing disease or guide family planning decisions, other genetic tests confer a diagnosis or guide treatment decisions. Genetic counselors are not trained to diagnose and treat patients, and therefore ordering of such tests, as well as interpreting and returning results to patients, should be performed only by a physician or by a genetic counselor working collaboratively with the patient's physician. For those states that choose to allow genetic counselors to order genetic tests and other diagnostic studies, we recommend that they be required to work in collaboration with a physician when performing such activities.

With the rapid increase in knowledge about the relationships between genetics and disease that has developed over the past several decades, genetic services have become increasingly more complex and require a unique combination of counseling skills and medical knowledge. As such, it is particularly important for

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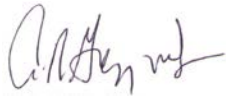
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genetic counselors and physicians to work collaboratively in team environments to ensure that patients are receiving the best care possible.

ACMG supports the establishment of state licensure programs for genetic counselors and believes that licensure enhances the ability of genetic counselors to provide appropriate genetic counseling services to those who need them. Furthermore, licensure helps protect the public from the harms that would ensue from inaccurate and inappropriate counseling that could be provided by inadequately trained individuals holding themselves out to the public as genetic counselors. However, we strongly believe that genetic counselors should be licensed to provide genetic counseling services and not to practice medicine.

ACMG appreciates the opportunity to express our support for House Bill 2619, and we are available to provide additional information if needed.

Sincerely,



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



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American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics

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