Connecticut State Medical Society
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160 St. Ronan Street, New Haven, CT 06511-2390 (203) 865-0587 FAX (203) 865-4997

Connecticut State Medical Society Testimony in Opposition to
H.B. 7159 - An Act Updating the Scope of Practice of Optometry
And
H.B.1254 An Act Allowing Electrologists to use Laser Technology for Hair Removal
Presented to the Public Health Committee
March 5, 2007

Senator Handley Representative Sayers and Members of the Public Health Committee, on behalf of the more than 7,000 members of the Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS), we respectfully provide this testimony to you today in strong opposition to H.B. 7159 - An Act Updating the Scope of Practice of Optometry and H.B.1254 An Act Allowing Electrologists to use Laser Technology for Hair Removal. We stand in unity with the various medical specialty societies who will provide detailed testimony to you today to demonstrate that these two proposed pieces of legislation are inherently dangerous and absolutely not in the best interest of the safety of our patients. As we have stated repeated in testimony before this committee, we do not believe that in the name of quality of care you can substitute the care of any type of health care provider or professional for the medical and technical skills, knowledge, and training of a licensed and practicing physician in the State of Connecticut.

H.B. 7159 - An Act Updating the Scope of Practice of Optometry is by no means an update to the scope of practice of optometry, but rather is a significant, dangerous, and unprecedented expansion of the services optometrists would be allowed to deliver in Connecticut without providing adequate and necessary safeguards for patient care. As highlighted today by several highly trained eye physicians, the conditions optometrists seek to treat with this so-called "update" were not within their training and practice when the current optometric practice act was established, nor are optometrists properly trained now in the treatment of these diseases and conditions in order to safely provide the care necessary to patients.

The diseases that optometrists seek to treat in this bill are very serious and often sight-threatening- there often is no corrective medical care that can be provided if incorrect care is initially provided and goes undiagnosed. In addition, these diseases and associated conditions often require surgery, which is not within the training received by optometrists. Furthermore, some of the conditions that optometrists wish to treat require detailed knowledge of systemic diseases, potential side effects and complications of treatment, and interactions of pharmaceuticals- which to our knowledge optometrists do not receive through their current training. For that reason, we urge you to listen closely

today to the testimony of the well trained and experienced physician medical specialists who come before you and reject House Bill 7159 as a threat to quality patient medical care in the State of Connecticut.

In addition to the previously mentioned bill, we also strongly oppose House Bill 1254, An Act Allowing Electrologists to use Laser Technology for Hair Removal. In addition to highly compelling testimony today by skilled and experienced physicians, you have been shown graphic examples of the potential negative and often irreversible outcomes that can occur when lasers are used by healthcare and other professionals who are not medically trained physicians. The images shown to you today cannot be considered anomalies or isolated incidents- they are examples of what can and often does go wrong when lasers are used for medically related services by non-physicians. Though laser hair removal may appear to be a simple cosmetic procedure, it is a surgical procedure and should not be performed on a patient by anyone other than a highly trained physician in Connecticut.

As you have heard from highly skilled physician medical specialists, many considerations must be taken into account when providing laser hair removal procedures to a patient. These considerations include: skin color; hair color, hair location; energy level; and protection of the skin; not to mention the patient's medical history, pharmaceutical regimens, and potential endocrine or hormonal abnormalities. In addition, due to the potential for adverse reactions and outcomes, laser hair removal must and should only be undertaken by skilled physicians who are well trained in laser surgery and experienced in dealing with and reacting appropriately if adverse reactions or outcomes were to transpire during the treatment of the patient.

CSMS continues in its commitment to work with this committee and our colleagues to identify and address any issue of access to quality medical care and to ensure that the health care needs of Connecticut residents are met to the best ability of licensed and trained physicians. Unfortunately, we feel that these proposed pieces of legislation and others before you today do nothing more than jeopardize the goal of ensuring that the people of Connecticut have access to and receive the highest quality of medical care available- the medical care that they most certainly deserve. These pieces of legislation before you today attempt to replace the medical care of a trained medical doctor, a physician, with that of a lesser educated and lesser trained health care provider. These pieces of legislation attempt to do this without demonstrating that the care that would be provided by these individuals would be at the high level necessary to adequately and appropriately care for patients. As physicians striving to deliver the highest quality of care to our patients we must vehemently oppose any potential legislation that puts our patients at risk. We ask you to do the same.