



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE February 11, 2009

Meg Hooper, Planning Branch 509-7218

Senate Bill 655 - An Act Requiring Cultural Competency Instruction for Physicians

The Department of Public Health provides the following concerns regarding Senate Bill 655.

Senate Bill 655 would require the Connecticut Medical Examining Board, in consultation with the Commissioner of Higher Education, to establish requirements for: (1) the development of a required cultural competency curriculum in all state medical schools; (2) continuing education requirements for physicians on cultural competency; and (3) re-licensure requirements concerning cultural competency for those physicians who did not receive the required training while in medical school.

The Connecticut Medical Examining Board does not have the resources or the authority to establish such requirements through regulation or other means. Mandatory continuing education and licensure requirements for licensed health care providers are enforced through the Department of Public Health. The Department has no authority or oversight over state medical schools, which are accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME).

The Department does not currently collect information from physician applicants related to whether they have completed cultural competency as part of medical school education. Building verification of course work into the application process may delay the issuance a license. It is not clear from this proposal whether physicians who are applying for a license in Connecticut for the first time would be required to complete cultural competency coursework prior to the issuance of a license if they did not receive the required training while in medical school. Additional resources may be necessary to identify those physicians who are currently licensed in Connecticut but who have not had cultural competency training while in medical school and to monitor compliance with any new license renewal requirements.

Physicians are already required to complete mandatory continuing education as a condition of license renewal. Should this proposal move forward, the Department respectfully requests the opportunity to work with the Committee on language that would incorporate mandatory continuing education in cultural competence into the existing requirements and to incorporate provisions that would allow the Department to seek appropriate disciplinary action for practitioners who do not comply with this requirement.

While the Department recognizes that cultural competency is critical to ensure that health care providers can understand and respond effectively to the cultural and linguistic needs of patients in the health care setting, the Department can not support this bill at this time as the Governor's budget does not provide resources for this purpose.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.

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