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Testimony of
Donna M. Fiorentino
International Society for Clinical Densitometry
Committee on Public Health
February 23, 2011
Proposed Bill 5639

Good Afternoon. My name is Donna Fiorentino. I am testifying on Proposed Bill 5639 that would require the Department of Public Health to establish licensure requirements for nuclear medicine technologists. I represent the International Society for Clinical Densitometry, an organization of over 5,000 doctors, technologists, and other allied health providers in over 70 countries. Our organization is devoted to excellence in the assessment of skeletal health with a particular with an interest in bone mass measurement. These tests are used to diagnose and treat osteoporosis. I am asking that as you review the regulation of nuclear technologists that you also address a related issue regarding technologists who perform bone density exams.

The reason these issues are related is that CGS 20-74ee, that addresses bone density testing, seems to indicate that only nuclear medicine technologists can perform bone density tests. Section 20-74ee states in part:

“(4) Nothing in subsection (c) of section 19a-14, sections 20-74aa to 20-74cc, inclusive, and this section shall be construed to require licensure as a radiographer or to limit the activities of a Nuclear Medicine Technologist certified by the Nuclear Medicine Technology Certification Board or the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists, provided such individual is engaged in the operation of a bone densitometry system under the supervision, control and responsibility of a physician licensed pursuant to chapter 370.”

That is an extraordinary requirement—normally bone density tests are performed by radiologic technologists who are certified by either the International Society for Clinical Densitometry, or by ASRT, American Society for Radiologic Technologists. Section 20-74ee dates from a time—prior to 1986—when the technology used to measure bone density in the spine and hip was called DPA or dual photon absorptiometry. The energy source for this technology was gadolinium (which is a radioactive isotope). This likely explains the tie to nuclear medicine in CGS 20-74ee to bone density testing.

Currently, the technology used to measure bone density is called- dual energy x-ray absorptiometry or DXA. The tests are performed on a bone densitometer, a piece of equipment that emits a very small amount of radiation—about 5 micro Seiverts per exam. In comparison, a chest Xray is 50-150 micro Seiverts, mammography is 450 micro Seiverts. NY to LA roundtrip flight is 60 micro Seiverts. The level of radiation on a densitometer stays constant and cannot be changed by the operator. The test takes about five to ten minutes and the results are then read and interpreted by a physician.

The ISCD has the oldest and largest certification program for technologists in the field of bone densitometry. Our rigorous certification process is designed to ensure competency in the field of bone densitometry and has been approved by the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA). ISCD currently has a total of 10,681 Certified Clinical Densitometrists (CCD), Certified Densitometry Technologists (CDT) and Certified Bone Densitometry Technologists

(CBDT). Many other states and Medicare carriers recognize ISCD certification as an appropriate credential for individuals performing bone density testing.

ISCD certification lends assurance to patients and regulators that an individual who is ISCD certified has achieved a high level of competency in the field of bone densitometry. Applicants for technologists certification must pass a 125 question computer generated examination covering the following topics: osteoporosis, basic science of bone densitometry, device operation principles, x-ray science and biology, radiation safety and quality assurance, quality control, computers in bone densitometry, anatomy in bone densitometry, patient care in the bone densitometry lab, patient positioning, scan acquisition, scan analysis, results and interpretation, clinical management of the osteoporotic patient, evaluating DXA scans and vertebral fracture assessment.

In addition, applicants who pass the written portion of the exam must also successfully complete a practical part to the certification process consisting of properly acquired and analyzed bone density scans. Applicants are required to document six months of experience acquiring bone density scans and have performed at least 100 central DXA human patient scans at two skeletal sites (hip, spine, or forearm) in order to be eligible to take the CBDT test.

Applicants for certification who have passed the written exam and the practical scan portion are certified for a three year period. ISCD assures that Certified Bone Densitometry Technologists keep their skills up to date and maintain their awareness of important developments in the field of bone densitometry by requiring applicants for recertification to fulfill a continuing education requirement of 24 credit hours during the three-year certification period. The following link will direct you to the ISCD certification page of our website and provides detailed information about the ISCD certification program:

<http://www.iscd.org/Visitors/certification/Index.cfm>

As you contemplate an appropriate level of regulation for nuclear technologists, on behalf of the International Society for Clinical Densitometry, we urge you to take the opportunity to update section 20-74ee to allow individuals who perform bone density tests to be certified by the ISCD or by American Society for Radiologic Technologists. Certification by these groups would protect patients and provide the highest quality DXA testing.