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SB 1052 – An Act Concerning the Practice of Acupuncture

Testimony of Carrie Sawtell, L.Ac., M.S., Dipl. O.M. (NCCAOM)

Public Health Committee Public Hearing March 2nd, 2011

Dear Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and Members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Carrie Sawtell, and I am a licensed acupuncturist in the State of Connecticut. After suffering from digestive disorders since childhood, I discovered acupressure, which uses massage to stimulate acupuncture points. I soon realized that simply pressing a few points on my abdomen greatly reduced my pain and improved my digestion. I decided to become an acupuncturist so that I could share this amazing medicine with others.

I received my B.A. from Wesleyan University, and then moved to California, where I studied at the Acupressure Institute in Berkeley. Following that, I completed a four-year Masters Degree in Traditional Chinese Medicine at the Academy of Chinese Culture and Health Sciences in Oakland. Upon graduation, I moved to Shanghai, China to continue my studies. I completed an Advanced Acupuncture Training Course at the Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, and also interned in two of Shanghai's prestigious Western and Chinese integrative medicine hospitals. I've been living in Shanghai for the past 3 ½ years, and recently returned to Connecticut to open my own acupuncture clinic.

I moved to Connecticut because I feel that it will be a great state in which to live and work. I will be opening a community acupuncture clinic in Windsor, which will offer a sliding scale of only $15 - $35 per treatment. Acupuncture is safe and effective, and I hope to provide affordable health care to those who are underserved. Part of my decision to move to Connecticut was predicated on the fact that Connecticut seems to be interested in maintaining adequate legal protection for acupuncturists.

Chinese medicine has a history spanning over 2,000 years and has its own unique diagnostic methods. It also has its own unique treatment methods, such as moxibustion, cupping, and, of course, acupuncture. In addition, Chinese medicine uses its own unique medical perspective and terminology to address diseases and conditions according to the body's holistic functioning.

Although acupuncturists use Chinese diagnostic and treatment methods, we also receive training in the Western medical sciences, including Anatomy, Physiology, Chemistry, Physics, Biophysics, and Psychology. Our Masters degree, while focusing on Chinese medicine, includes Western medical courses, including Pathology, Western Physical and Lab Diagnosis, and Western Nutrition. Many of our patients come to us after receiving a Western medical diagnosis from their doctor, so we are expected to know these diagnoses and how they relate to our Chinese medical diagnostic and treatment methods.

Given our unique practice, and the fact that Chinese medicine uses diagnostic methods, treatment methods, and terminology that is not familiar to the general public, it is very important that the current practice definition be updated to inform patients and practitioners alike of our entire scope of practice.

I want to thank the Committee for raising SB 1052. Approving this bill will enable your constituents to better understand the practice of acupuncture and how it differs from other modes of alternative as well as conventional medical practices. It will encourage more acupuncturists to open clinics in Connecticut, and will prevent patients from seeking treatment in other states that have broader statutes concerning the practice of Chinese medicine.

Sincerely,

Carrie L. Sawtell

Cc: Senator John Kissel, Representative Peggy Sayers