

Public Health Committee Testimony: SB 437

March 17, 2014

My name is Sally S. Rosengren and I am Medical Director of the Division of Human Genetics at UCONN Health Center and Department of Genetics at CT Children's Medical Center in Hartford. I live in New Hartford CT. I appreciate the opportunity to express my support of SB 437, and thank Senator Gerratana and Representative Johnson for raising this bill, which pertains to the licensure of genetic counselors in the State of Connecticut.

I am Associate Professor in the Department of Pediatrics and Department of Genetics and Developmental Biology at UCONN School of Medicine, and a licensed board-certified pediatrician and medical geneticist. I work closely with my 6 genetic counseling and one MD-geneticist colleagues, seeing patients and teaching medical students, residents and other trainees.

I have been a medical geneticist for almost 30 years and over that time, have seen how dramatically the practice of Genetic Medicine has changed. Genetic testing used to be rarely performed, with only a few reference laboratories providing even fewer specific genetic tests, mostly for pediatric patients. Presently, there are multiple reference laboratories throughout the country providing a wide variety of testing, ranging from (among others), Non-invasive Prenatal Testing (NIPT), which can detect certain fetal chromosome anomalies in a pregnant woman's blood to Whole Genome Microarray used to detect genetic forms of autism to Next-Gen DNA sequencing panels used to detect the genetic underpinnings of many common adult conditions, such as certain cancers and cancer syndromes. These types of tests are becoming increasingly available, including through direct-to consumer genetic testing companies, to patients of all ages and for many different indications. This explosion in the number and complexity of genetic tests will require more and more genetic counseling professionals to provide accurate interpretation, risk assessment and recommendations. Licensure will ensure consistency in the professional standards of this increasing number of genetic counselors.

I strongly support SB 437. Licensing will assure that genetic counselors will go through the same rigorous credentialing process as other health professionals, such as physicians. This bill will ensure that patients in Connecticut seeking genetic counseling are fully aware of the credentials, and level of education and training of the individuals providing this counseling. I look forward to Connecticut joining the growing number of states nationwide that require licensure for genetic counselors. I also support the modifications and comments on the bill that were shared with the committee chairs by our team of genetic counselors, geneticists, and other interested individuals.

Sally S. Rosengren, M. D.