

**Testimony of**

**Charles Lee, Scientific Director, The Jackson Laboratory for Genomic Medicine**

**Kate Reed, Director of Clinical and Continuing Education, The Jackson Laboratory**

**Emily Edelman, Associate Director of Clinical and Continuing Education, The Jackson Laboratory**

*in support of*

**SB 857- AN ACT CONCERNING LICENSURE FOR GENETIC COUNSELORS**

**February 20, 2015**

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, Senator Markley, Representative Srinivasan and members of the Public Health Committee, this written testimony is submitted on behalf of Charles Lee, Scientific Director of The Jackson Laboratory for Genomic Medicine and Kate Reed and Emily Edelman, certified genetic counselors in the Clinical and Continuing Education Program at The Jackson Laboratory. We submit this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 857 - An Act Concerning Licensure for Genetic Counselors.

Genetic counselors provide critical and unique services in the United States healthcare system. They promote quality and health and safety benefits in healthcare through their ability to: appropriately utilize and communicate about emerging technologies in a rapidly changing area of medicine; accurately and in easy-to-understand terms, explain often difficult and often evolving genetic information to patients; and help individuals cope with the difficult pragmatic, emotional, ethical and social implications related to genetic testing. Genetic counselors have specialized and current knowledge that is essential for providing accurate genetic counseling and thus ensuring that patients benefit from genetic information. Licensure is needed to ensure that the quality of genetic counseling services remains high; that adverse events such as inappropriate use of genetic testing and psychological distress are avoided; and that patients and the public receive the best possible care.

At the Jackson Laboratory, we both employ and collaborate often with genetic counselors. On our staff, genetic counselors develop and deliver current and evidence-based genetics education to other healthcare providers, increasing appropriate integration of genetics into medicine across specialties. As our clinical testing portfolio expands, we have plans to hire additional genetic counselors in Connecticut to interpret, report out, and communicate with patients and providers about genomic test data. Genetic counselors play an important role in fulfilling the Jackson Laboratory mission to improve human health and we enthusiastically support Senate Bill 857 to facilitate licensure for genetic counselors.

We thank the committee for your time and interest and allowing us the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the important issue of genetic counselor licensure.