

Testimony of
Deborah B. Thibodeau
5 Woodcliff Dr., Simsbury, CT
in support of
SB 857- AN ACT CONCERNING LICENSURE FOR GENETIC COUNSELORS
February 20, 2015

Dear Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, Senator Markley, Representative Srinivasan and members of the Public Health Committee:

I am writing to testify in support of S.B. No. 857 - AN ACT CONCERNING LICENSURE FOR GENETIC COUNSELORS. This act is necessary in Connecticut to ensure the provision of quality genetic counseling services by qualified health professionals with specialized training in the field of genetic counselor or medical genetics.

I am a board certified genetic counselor with over thirteen years of experience working for university and private genetics departments in Connecticut, California, and Canada. Currently I live in Simsbury and am a stay-at-home mother, but most recently (1999-2004) I worked in the Medical Genetics Department at the University of Connecticut Health Center providing prenatal genetic services to individuals and couples with family histories of genetic disease, abnormal ultrasounds or other pregnancy complications, and pregnancy exposures to medications or other potentially harmful drugs or environmental hazards as a clinical service provider for the Connecticut Pregnancy Exposure Information Service. I earned a Master's Degree in Genetic Counseling from the Medical College of Virginia/Virginia Commonwealth University and achieved board certification through the American Board of Medical Genetics while working for the University of British Columbia.

Throughout my career, I have witnessed individuals and families make life-changing decisions using information provided during genetic counseling, and I have seen them benefit from the supportive care that genetic counselors are uniquely trained to provide.

Genetic counselors provide an important and needed service. They have expertise in genetics and genetic counseling and function as an essential member of the health care team. Genetic counselors have the ability to explain, accurately and in easy-to-understand terms, difficult and constantly evolving genetic information to patients; evaluate a complex family history; and, evaluate the need for genetic testing. They provide genetic information in a context of supportive care and sensitivity that is tailored to each patient's/family's particular needs. Genetic counselors keep up-to-date, through their training and continuing education, with advances in genetic technology, refinements in genetic testing and the implications of testing for the individual and their family members.

With the rapid advances in genetic technology, genetic counseling licensure is needed to ensure that the public is receiving this complex medical service by trained, qualified professionals who are committed to the field's professional standards and continuing education. Genetic counseling licensure will ensure that the public is afforded the best level of care when utilizing genetic counseling services. And with quality genetic counseling services, the public will experience improved health and wellbeing, and a

reduction of healthcare costs through provision of the most effective treatments/testing options and fewer unnecessary tests.

Many states have recognized the importance of genetic counseling licensure or are working towards this effort in order to maintain a high quality of care for the public. Over one third of genetic counselors in the U.S. are licensed. According to the National Society of Genetic Counselors, as of March 21, 2014 the states currently issuing genetic counseling licensure include:

California	Massachusetts	Ohio	Tennessee
Delaware	Nebraska	Oklahoma	Utah
Illinois	New Jersey	Pennsylvania	Washington
Indiana	New Mexico	South Dakota	

Additionally, Hawaii, New Hampshire, North Dakota and Virginia had bills passed or were in rulemaking. I hope you will support adding Connecticut to the list.

Thank you for your consideration of the licensing of genetic counselors in the state of Connecticut.

Sincerely,

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