

**Testimony of**  
**Emily Smith, Cardiology Genetic Counselor at Yale University, from New Haven**  
*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, my name is Emily Smith and I am here to testify in strong support of Senate Bill 857- An Act Concerning Licensure for Genetic Counselors.

I have been a genetic counselor in cardiovascular medicine at Yale for the past 3 years. In this capacity, I have worked with many individuals and their families to discuss personal and family medical histories of sudden cardiac death/resuscitation, arrhythmias, thoracic aneurysms, and cardiomyopathies.

When I am working a patient, there are many things that go into the genetic counseling process. I elicit a family history, and use that information in addition to the patient's medical history to determine whether or not it is significant from a genetics perspective and genetic testing is appropriate. I discuss the pros and cons of genetic testing and make sure to discuss the available testing technology. I review the possible results of genetic testing and what those outcomes could mean for the patient and their family members. When testing results are available, I study the literature in relation to variants and genes that the laboratory reports for each patient, so that I can know how common the specific variant is, what populations (i.e. Caucasian versus Latino versus Southeast Asian) the variant it been reported in, and if there is any correlation between the variant or the specific gene and the disease with which the patient presented. I use this information and work directly with a cardiologist as well as other members of a patient's care team to offer recommendations for follow up, including screening recommendations and referrals to other providers for family members who live in and out of the state of Connecticut after the genetic testing results are available. Post-test, In addition, I act as a resource for patients after genetic testing is completed. In this role, I have provided resources, such as support group contacts, general information about genetics, and news if there is new literature about their particular gene variant that may be of use to them, their families, or their care team. The process can be time consuming, but the benefits to both patients and the healthcare team are great. Having a licensure for genetic counselors can ensure that the quality of those that call themselves a genetic counselor remains high and that the public is afforded the best level of care.

Because the field of genetics is dynamic, it is important for me to always be learning, whether through lectures and conferences, or through reading the medical literature. With this information, I can give the most accurate, up-to-date information I can to patient and other medical professionals; both groups rely on my insights and continuing education. By having licensure, the State can

safeguard its citizens that providers who represent themselves as genetic counselors have the appropriate training and continuing education.

While cardiology is a relatively new specialty in genetic counseling, it is growing immensely across the country. The demand for genetic counselors and testing in this area of medicine as well as in oncology, pediatrics, prenatal, and other areas will continue to grow through the years. By having licensed genetic counselors, a referring physician and the general public can know who is appropriately trained and has the skill set that is necessary.

Genetic testing in general is complicated. It's not as simple as just getting your blood drawn or having your cheek swabbed. There are always new advances in technology; new genes are still being discovered for conditions, and several companies that offer similar testing. As a genetic counselor, I am uniquely qualified to simplify this ever-changing landscape for both patients and other healthcare team members and should be recognized with licensure.

I want to thank Senator Gerrata, Representative Ritter, Senator Markley, Representative Srinivasan and members of the Public Health Committee for taking the time to hear my testimony and the testimony of the others today and appreciate your interest in this topic that is clearly one of importance to me.