

Dear Committee on Public Health,

I am writing today to the committee and specifically my Representative Michelle Cook and Representative Godfrey for putting on your agenda for discussion: **PROPOSED BILL NO. 6237 AN ACT ADOPTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DIABETES ADVISORY COUNSEL.**

I am a Registered Dietitian and Certified Diabetes Educator with over 30 years of caring for people with diabetes. It is important that we secure Medicaid coverage for diabetes self-management education at programs accredited by the American Diabetes Association or the American Association of Diabetes Educators. Currently, some of the most vulnerable citizens in the state, those on Medicaid do not have access or coverage of diabetes self-management education from nationally recognized programs offered throughout the state. I work with a health care team that puts the person with diabetes at the center of the team that consists of their primary care provider, endocrinologist if needed, nurse practitioners, and registered nurses and dietitians who are certified diabetes educators. We also have available a social worker and lifestyle modification coach.

The diabetes self-management education program that I work in has been awarded recognition by the American Diabetes Association. This is the Gold standard for diabetes education and we know we get results. In a recent review 82% of our patients lowered their HbA1c by an average of about 2% within 6 months after attending our diabetes education workshops. Diabetes Self-Management Education is so important to assist the patient with following through with their management plan prescribed by their provider, I.E. taking medications as ordered, injecting insulin correctly, appropriate dosing of insulin, home glucose monitoring, meal planning, meeting exercise goals, healthy coping with diabetes as a chronic life-long disease, understanding and recognizing acute and chronic complications of diabetes, the list goes on. Diabetes Educators are specially trained to coach patients to learning to live a healthy life without complications of diabetes. As we know the complications of diabetes including blindness, loss of limbs, heart disease, nerve damage and kidney disease can lead to a poor quality of life not to mention the health care financial burden.

Recently a patient of ours was told by their primary care provider that their A1c percentage (average blood glucose over the last 3 months) was perfect (6.3% which indicates an average blood sugar of about 130 mg/dl) and that he was in perfect glucose control. However, the average blood sugar doesn't give the full picture. When the patient met with an RN/CDE colleague of mine it was discovered that while his average blood sugar was excellent he had excursions of his blood sugar from less than 70 mg/dl (hypoglycemia) to more than 300mg/dl (hyperglycemia). This up and down pattern of blood sugars was discovered on a continuous glucose sensor first interpreted by my colleague. Both very low and very high blood sugars can be life-threatening.

People with diabetes on Medicaid should have available to them all of the medical resources and health education that is required by all other payers in the state. In addition I feel it is important that a plan be devised and financial support provided to increase the states pool of lay and professional diabetes educators who represent at risk populations. There also needs to be a modification in cost-sharing of diabetes self-management education by reforming insurance plans to decrease barriers and ensure that such education is not subject to insurance deductibles or copayments. There should be a capacity for his state wide diabetes self-management education program with an emphasis on culturally and linguistically appropriate standards and improved access.

For all of these reasons and those from others who are appearing before you today as well as other written testimony I am asking for your support and action for this bill. I appreciate your time and attention. If I can answer any of your questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Regards,

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