March 6, 2017

Senator Terry Gerratana

Senator Heather Somers

Representative Jonathan Steinberg

Connecticut State Legislative Joint Committee on Public Health

RE: HB 6487

Dear Sens. Gerratana and Somers, Rep. Steinberg and Public Health Committee Members,

I am here to testify in support of HB 6487, a Bill to License Lactation Consultants. Having been involved in the field of Human Lactation for over 30 years I have had the honor to support upward of 2 thousand families in their breastfeeding efforts. I understand the complexity of the field, it's relation to the health care system and importance of setting standards which will both protect the public and facilitate access to lactation services for all populations.

It is widely accepted that human milk is the gold standard for infant nutrition and that breastfeeding is protective against illnesses in both mother and child. (1) Many organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, The World Health Organization, UNICEF, The US Surgeon General, and The American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology support and have identified breastfeeding as the preferred method of infant feeding.

For the past 20 years I have worked as an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) supporting mothers and babies, primary care providers, nursing staff, specialty providers and others in the federally qualified health care setting and other settings. Additionally I have trained, supervised and advised many who have sought to pursue the IBCLC lactation consultant credential and others who although they did not meet the standards one must meet to qualify to sit for the IBCLC boards, have sought my support in securing other credentials in the spectrum of breastfeeding services. While many are trained to offer lactation education and basic lactation support, only the IBCLC credential identifies one who is qualified to address the clinical management of breastfeeding. The IBCLC credential is widely accepted as the gold standard in lactation care. For your consideration I have included a reference which identifies several lactation credentials and their corresponding prerequisites, training and scope of practice. (2)

The International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners (IBLCE) sets rigorous standards one must meet in order to become an IBCLC.(3) Eligibility criteria to qualify to sit for the IBLCE Boards are divided into 3 categories all of which have criteria which must be met in the following areas:

1. Education in specific health science subjects
2. Education in human lactation and breastfeeding
3. Clinical practice in providing care to breastfeeding families
The International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners was established in 1985. A governing body with representation from relevant stakeholders provides oversight of the IBCLE certification process and program. The IBCLE certification program is accredited by the prestigious National Commission of Certifying Agencies (NCAA). NCAA certification is a quality standard for certification programs and to receive NCAA certification ‘a certification program must meet defined and objective standards pertaining to numerous aspects of its program and examination’. Psychometric principals are utilized to develop exam assessment instruments.

“Certification is recognition that an individual has met eligibility requirements and has passed a rigorous exam that assesses knowledge in breastfeeding management”. (4)

Once the IBLCE exam is passed IBCLCs across the country can be found on a national registry of lactation consultants. You will find that many IBCLC lactation consultants use IBCLC, RLC after their name to denote both their board certification and status as a registered allied health care professional. (5)

IBCLC lactation consultants have specified professional standards which include clinical expectations, a code of professional conduct and scope of practice. (6) They are also subject to disciplinary procedures which include public reprimand, suspension and/or revocation. (7) Scope of practice is outlined in detail on the IBLCE webpage and states, “the aim of the scope of practice is to protect the public by promoting that all IBCLC certificants provide safe, competent and evidenced-based care”.

Towards this end of protecting the public, I support and respectfully request your support of HB 6487. The licensure of IBCLC lactation consultants will ensure that those who practice human lactation and deliver breastfeeding care in our state will have met a rigorous standard in order to have secured the IBCLC board certified lactation credential and state licensure. This standard will serve as a measure which consumers, insurers, health care professionals and others will be able to rely on.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Respectfully Submitted,

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References: