

**Written Testimony of the  
Connecticut Orthopaedic Society  
HB 7159 AA Addressing Opioid Use – Tuesday, March 12, 2019**

Senator Fonfara, Senator Witkos , Representative Cheeseman and distinguished Members of the General Law Committee, on behalf of the more than 230 orthopaedic surgeons of the Connecticut Orthopaedic Society, we appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony on HB 7159, AA Addressing Opioid Use.

Opioid abuse continues to be a serious public health matter and an addiction epidemic unlike others. Since 2016, the State of Connecticut and Legislature has enacted numerous policies seeking to reduce and prevent opioid drug overuse and abuse all in an effort to help our patients, protect the public and stop this epidemic that has claimed many lives and destroyed many families.

The Connecticut Orthopaedic Society appreciates the Legislature’s continued commitment to addressing the ongoing public health epidemic. As orthopaedic surgeons, we prescribe controlled substances for legitimate medical purposes and are very cautious and cognizant in our prescribing practices to all our patients and most of our practices are equipped with Electronic Medical Records (EMR) that document the diagnosis code as well as drugs prescribed to the patient in their electronic medical record. However, some EMR systems may not be able to handle this propose requirement and there are practices that do not use EMR systems, both these situations would make this provision in HB 7159, Sec. 6, a cumbersome addition to the practicing physician. Most importantly, we do not know why this new requirement is necessary or what it will achieve and improve in opioid drug prescribing as a pharmacist does not need to know what the diagnosis is for the opioid drug prescribed.

Furthermore, our Society members are concerned that while the language notes that the diagnosis code is not required to be on the label; it does not prohibit the pharmacist from doing so after consultation with the prescribing physician which could lead to public awareness of a patient’s confidential, HIPPA protected medical information by not only the pharmacist but also any staff associated with the retail pharmacy stores.

We believe that HB 7159, Sec. 6, not only jeopardizes our patient’s medical information and could lead to serious HIPAA violations but also would require that their health diagnosis be reported to the pharmacist without justification as to the need for the pharmacist to have the confidential information.

In closing, we appreciate this Committee’s work to continue to stem the opioid epidemic and we ask you to protect the medical information of all our patients by removing the proposed language found in HB 7159, Sec. 6. We are proud that the orthopaedic community is working diligently to battle against opioid abuse and addiction, on the national level, as a state society, and within our own practices to ensure the safety of our patients and would like to serve as a resource to this Committee and the Legislature as we all continue on a path to eliminate opioid overuse and abuse. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,  
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