

F R E D B L O E M , M . D .

Testimony in Support of House Bill 259 before the Health and Government Operations Committee

January 19, 2020

I am Dr. Fred Bloem and I have been a licensed physician in the State of Maryland since 1994. This is my written testimony in support of House Bill 259, the Patient Access to Integrative Health Care Act. I will also provide oral testimony.

My background includes one year of internal medicine training at Sinai Hospital in Baltimore and two years of family medicine training at Prince George's Hospital Center. I am a board member of the Maryland Society of Integrative Medicine and a member of MedChi.

About 20 years ago I came to realize that as a general practitioner I treated my patients' symptoms mainly with pharmaceutical drugs. We treat hypertension with blood pressure drugs. We treat diabetes with diabetic medications and so on. I recognized that most of my patients were obese and I decided that I needed to learn how help my patients lose weight. I joined the American Society of Bariatric Medicine and started their training program. I found that patients who did lose weight using those treatment methods did see improvements in their blood pressure and their blood sugar levels.

As the years went by I met many patients with complex health problems, such as Lyme disease and coinfections, autoimmune diseases, and neurodegenerative diseases. Many of them had not seen any improvements in spite of having seen many medical specialists and having received a variety of medical procedures or medications. In many cases patients had suffered from adverse reactions or side effects from treatments or medications. Some patients are so chemically sensitive that they are unable to tolerate pharmaceutical drugs.

On many occasions patients asked me if I could help them with treatments that they had discovered in their research. In some cases I was able to help them with these treatments that I learned by taking courses offered by reputable organizations such as the American College for the Advancement of Medicine. In other cases patients chose to other states or even to other countries in order to receive treatments that are unavailable in Maryland.

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The integrative medical treatments that I have learned include nutritional and herbal treatments and protocols to eliminate toxins from the body. In my experience they have been very effective and, most importantly, very safe.

On a personal note, I have a daughter who is significantly developmentally delayed. She is currently being evaluated at Johns Hopkins Hospital where she is receiving excellent care. She will need surgery but her case is not straightforward. If there were any integrative therapies that could help her I would want them to be administered and supervised by a physician licensed in the State of Maryland who has received the proper training in those therapies.

There are reputable organizations like the American College for the Advancement of Medicine, the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine, the Institute for Functional Medicine, and the International College of Integrative Medicine that offer excellent training courses and in some cases certification examinations. Even the American Board of Physician Specialties (ABPS), which is the official multi-specialty board certifying body of the American Association of Physician Specialists (AAPS) now offers an integrative medicine certification exam. The ABPS is one of the three most prominent nationally recognized multi-specialty certifying entities in North America. The Member Boards of the ABPS offer specialty certification examinations for qualified allopathic (M.D.) and osteopathic (D.O.) physicians.

This Bill is needed because the people of Maryland need to have access to integrative health care methods and because the physicians of Maryland deserve to be protected from unfair investigations and board sanctions solely because they want to help their patients by offering integrative treatment methods.

For the reasons stated above I am asking you to support and vote FOR House Bill 259.

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