

Testimony of Heather Gunn

110 Harmony Hall Road

Gaithersburg, MD 20877

HeatherEgunn@gmail.com

House Bill 259: The Patient's Access to Integrative Medicine Act of 2020

Due to the short notice of our early hearing, a few of the physicians who wanted to testify could not make it in person and are therefore submitting their testimony in writing.

To be considerate of your time, I would like to read only two or three sentences from two of these physicians since it is important that these points be heard.

Dr. Hope McIntyre, a physician that treats Lyme patients writes:

...according to the ILADS guidelines “[t]he lack of pharmaceutical interest and its concomitant funding does not encourage the innovative research that is essential to improving care for patients with Lyme disease.” When pharmaceutical interest is lacking, clinical practices often become the source of therapeutic innovation...

The US FDA states: “Valid new uses for drugs already on the market are often first discovered through serendipitous observations and therapeutic innovations [by physicians in the field], subsequently confirmed by well-planned and executed clinical investigations.”

Dr. Steve Saltzman, a Johns Hopkins trained physician writes:

“My testimony may be the most relevant that you will hear on this bill since I am the only physician I know in the State of Maryland willing to come forward to let the Senate know that I have actually declined to offer patients many evidence-based therapies simply because the treatments are not widely recognized within the accepted medical paradigm and could lead to medical board investigations by those that do not embrace nor understand alternative medicine.”

Finally, it is important that I read you this brief letter from a physician:

I am an integrative physician in Maryland who has been practicing for close to 20 years. I treat a variety of disease states and medical conditions with a mixture of complementary and conventional methods to the extent that I feel comfortable considering the current "climate" in Maryland.

I have always been hoping that I would be able to more fully help my patients recover from many different illnesses by legislation more favorable to integrative medicine. Due to the culture of misunderstanding between traditional and integrative medicine, I have always "held back" since I am afraid I may be improperly taken before the board. There are many integrative therapies that can aid patients that are not given in my office nor other integrative medical doctors' offices in the state of Maryland even though they are safer, more effective and less costly than traditional treatments for the same condition. These include integrative treatments for Lyme, chronic pain, and Alzheimer's...to name a few.

There are also disease states that functional medicine doctors have evidence based tests and answers for that conventional doctors do not know how to look for or treat. As a result, a lot of these patients are simply prescribed narcotics and other symptom-relief-only medications by traditional medicine to deal with the pain instead of trying to find the root cause of the disease process --- as an integrative medical doctor would. Therefore, if this bill was passed more patients would be able to find the root cause of their pain instead of simply being band-aided with a narcotic pain medication.

Integrative Medicine is a burgeoning field of medicine with board certification, professional organizations, fellowships and CME opportunities. Many of the therapies that integrative physicians offer are supported by substantial evidence and are as evidence-based as many conventional medicine protocols and treatments.

The passage of The Patient's Access to Integrative Medicine Act of 2020 would be tremendously helpful for the citizens of Maryland. There is no doubt that it will help patients get well and save lives. It could also allow a more productive conversation between the Medical Board, traditional physicians and integrative doctors and thus open up lines of communication for everyone's benefit.

While I submit this letter anonymously since I have concerns that even speaking up in favor of integrative medicine may result in a board inquiry, I am happy to discuss this confidentially with any interested Senator or Delegate via arrangements with the board of the Maryland Society of Integrative Medicine.

Sincerely,
Anonymous Maryland Integrative Medical Doctor