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February 04, 2020

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass

Health and Government Operations Committee

House Office Building, room 241

Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: OPPOSITION TO *HB0259 (SB0103) Health Occupations - Diagnostic Evaluation and Treatment of Patients - Disciplinary Actions (The Patient's Access to Integrative Healthcare Act of 2020)*

Chairwoman and Members of the Committee:

The Secular Coalition for Maryland is opposed to government facilitating, enabling, or promoting the practice of so-called “alternative medicine”. There is no alternative chemistry, alternative plumbing, alternative nursing, alternative aviation piloting, alternative law, etc.. This is because chemistry, plumbing, nursing, aviation piloting, law, etc. all operate on the same underlying principle. The one and only reliable standard for such professional services is best fit with the available empirical evidence.

The recommendations that we have good reason to consider good for health - nutrition, exercise (for endurance, strength, balance, flexibility), daily sleep in darkness, some exposure to sunlight during the day, social interaction, mental stimulation, stress reduction, etc. - are part of established scientific medicine. Alternatives to evidence based medicine are, by definition, at least partially not based on widely accepted scientific principles of health, disease, and health

care, yet they self-appropriate for themselves the "scientific", "evidence based", and "medicine" labels. There is no flaw or weakness with current medical practice that is remediated or eliminated by alternatives to evidence based medicine.

Alternative medicine aims to achieve the healing effects of medicine, but lacks biological plausibility, lacks empirical support, is untestable, or has been proven ineffective. Complementary medicine (CM), complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), integrated medicine or integrative medicine (IM), and holistic medicine are among many rebrandings of the same phenomenon. Research into alternative therapies often fails to follow proper research protocols (such as placebo-controlled trials, blind experiments and calculation of prior probability). In contrast, experimental medicine employs scientific methods to test plausible therapies by way of responsible and ethical clinical trials, producing evidence of either effect or of no effect.

There are many individuals and institutions profiting from promoting a hodgepodge of treatments that are likely to be of no benefit to anyone receiving those treatments. Alternative medicine ruses, such as homeopathy, craniosacral therapy, osteopathic manipulation as a treatment for systemic disease, magnetic therapy, orthomolecular therapy, etc., have been repeatedly disproven by clinical trials. These treatments originated, and continue to be promoted, without first having been demonstrated to be effective. Government should be discouraging and cautioning against relying on "alternative medicine".