

February 17, 2020

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
Chair
House Health and Government Operations
Maryland General Assembly
6 Bladen Street, Room 241
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: House Bill 428 – Oppose

Dear Chair Pendergrass:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and student members, I am writing to express our **opposition to House Bill (H.B.) 428**, which would alter the term “podiatrist” to “podiatric physician” throughout the Annotated Code of Maryland. The AMA believes the term “physician” should only be used by those who have a Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.) degree. Patients overwhelmingly agree. **According to a recent AMA survey of adults nationwide, 88 percent agreed with the statement, “only licensed medical doctors or doctors of osteopathic medicine should be able to use the title of ‘physician.’”** Expanding the definition of physician to include podiatrists is both misleading and confusing to patients.

Patients want more transparency in health care. This is particularly important as the evolution of our health care system requires patients to play a greater role in their health care decision-making. Couple this with the proliferation of health professionals – with varying levels of education and training – and it is clearly more important than ever for the titles used by all health professionals to be easily recognizable by patients.

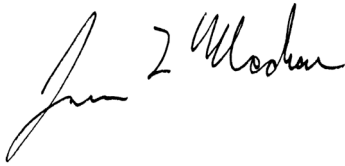
Patients are already confused about the distinction between podiatrists and physicians. According to a recent AMA survey, 67 percent of those surveyed identified a podiatrist as a physician, while only 22 did not and 11 percent were unsure. There is a real concern that allowing podiatrists to use the term “podiatric physicians” will only serve to further confuse the public.

We urge you to put patients first by promoting transparency and clarity in health care. For this reason and those discussed above, we encourage you to oppose H.B. 428 and not allow podiatrists to use the term “podiatric physician.”

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide our input. Please contact Kimberly Horvath, JD, Senior Legislative Attorney, AMA Advocacy Resource Center, at kimberly.horvath@ama-assn.org or (312) 464-4783 with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim L Madara". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

James L. Madara, MD

cc: MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society
American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American Orthopaedic Foot and Ankle Society
Willarda V. Edwards, MD