

Testimony of Dr. Jacob Wisbeck in opposition to HB 428
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I am here today in opposition to HB 428. I hope you see this not as a conflict between two groups of providers, but as about public safety. You have already heard testimony from my Orthopaedic colleagues, including data that shows equivalence does not exist between the standards to become a Medical Doctor and a Podiatrist, in particular the critical United States Medical Licensing Examination. Imagine the legal profession without the Bar, or a CPA without its legendarily hard exam.

I graduated medical school from Temple University in Philadelphia. Temple also has a school of podiatry. Never did candidates from the podiatric program take part in any medical school classes. They were trained with their own students, instructors, and, in fact, actually had their own building separate from the medical school. It is a completely isolated training experience that occurs with little input from the wider medical community.

I believe patients should be able to choose their treatment provider. One of your critical roles in this committee is to make sure that not only are public safety standards upheld, but also that the public has the information to make that choice in an informed way. Whether they choose an Orthopaedic Surgeon or a Podiatrist makes no difference to me, as long as the patients' understand the decision they are making. The podiatry community is now split. Some use the term proudly, while many will not use the word "Podiatrist" in their advertisements, website or even in their office. It is almost impossible to find the word on the website of one of their national organizations, the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons.

Very often in my practice when seeing a patient for a second opinion, the patient had no idea they were being treated by a Podiatrist. I often hear, "They are a Surgeon, not a Podiatrist". Some state in their advertising that they perform orthopaedic surgery, but leave the "o" uncapitalized to create confusion.

This bill *blurs* the distinctions between podiatrists and medical doctors and makes it even more difficult for the public to understand who is treating them. Imagine further the confusion if this bill passes and a patient hears their podiatrist is now a special kind of physician not regulated by the Maryland Board of Physicians.

It is not in the public interest to bypass regulatory standards or make it harder to tell the difference between types of care providers. I urge you to vote NO on this bill.