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Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners

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**2021 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL NO: SB 169
COMMITTEE: EHEA
POSITION: SUPPORT

TITLE: Health Occupations – Podiatric Physicians

BILL ANALYSIS:

This bill would authorize the use of the name “Podiatric Physician” as an update to the present nomenclature of Podiatrist, in order or to be aligned with the educational requirements for licensure that are in place and mandatory, as indicated in the Practice Act of the Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners and the respective COMAR.

POSITION AND RATIONALE:

The Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners supports SB 169. The term “Podiatric Physician” makes complete sense when analyzing the verbiage and context. The definition of “Physician” means someone who can practice medicine, while the definition of “medicine” is the practice of the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disease. Therefore, a “Podiatric Physician” is someone who can practice medicine in relation to the foot and ankle. By definition, a Podiatrist is a doctor who diagnoses and treats disorders of the foot and ankle, while also providing preventative care to patients.

To become a Podiatrist, an applicant has to complete a four year college degree and then is required by majority of the schools to shadow a Podiatrist before they can even apply to a Podiatry School. During the four intense years of Podiatry School, the first two years of training are the same courses that other medical school students are required to take, like pathology, anatomy, histology, microbiology, etc. The only difference is that Podiatry students are actually required to take ADDITIONAL courses such as biomechanics and lower anatomy. After finishing comprehensive science courses in the first two years of Podiatry School, the remaining two years are clinical rotations and scrubbing into a variety of surgical cases. Once the four year Podiatry School is complete, the graduates go on to do a 2, 3 or 4 year residency. The residency

is completely focused on surgical training and patient care. By the time most Podiatrists are finished training, they have logged hundreds of surgical cases as first assists.

The majority of Podiatrists are surgeons. They perform surgical cases in their offices as well as in the operating room. Podiatrists are surgically trained to do amputations, bunion removal, hammertoe correction, cyst/mass excisions, ulcer treatments, lateral ankle stability, etc. Podiatrists are surgically trained to fix any foot and ankle pathology. There are some medical doctors who are not trained to do any type of surgery, yet they are classified as physicians.

Adding the term “Physician” to Podiatry not only makes sense, but it is way overdue. 36 other states classify their Podiatrists as “Podiatric Physicians”, because they recognize the rigorous training, the grit, the hard work and the true definition of the term applies to Podiatrists. By passing SB 169, Maryland will become the 37th state to recognize its Podiatrists with the appropriate title that they deserve and have earned, through coursework and clinical training, as well as their everyday clinical practice.

Thank you for considering this testimony. The Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners is respectfully requesting a favorable report on SB 169. If you require additional information, please contact Eva Schwartz, Executive Director of the Maryland Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners at (410) 764-4785 or at eva.schwartz@maryland.gov.

The opinion of the Board expressed in this document does not necessarily reflect that of the Department of Health or the Administration.