

January 22, 2021

The Honorable Paul Pinsky  
Chair  
Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs  
Maryland State Senate  
2 West Senate Miller Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Senate Bill 169 – Oppose

Dear Chairman Pinsky:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and student members, I am writing to express our **opposition to Senate Bill (S.B.) 169**, which would alter the term “podiatrist” to “podiatric physician” throughout the Annotated Code of Maryland. As patients are asked to navigate an increasing number of health professionals in the health care system, all with varying levels of education, training and certification, the AMA believes it is more important than ever for clarity in titles, so patients clearly understand who is providing their care. Allowing podiatrists to use the term “podiatric physician” only serves to further confuse an increasingly confusing system. Moreover, 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.

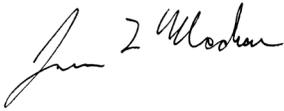
It is more important than ever for the titles used by all health professionals to be easily recognizable by patients. Patients are already confused about the distinction between podiatrists and physicians. According to a recent AMA survey, 67 percent of those surveyed identified a podiatrist as a physician, 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 S.B. 169 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](mailto:kimberly.horvath@ama-assn.org) with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jim L Madara".

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