

January 24, 2021

Dear Maryland Elected Officials,

On behalf of the **Cornelia de Lange Syndrome (CdLS) Foundation**, thank you for the opportunity to support **S.B.34/H.B.299, the “State Board of Physicians – Genetic Counselors – Licensing”**. This bill is for the professional licensure of genetic counselors in the state of Maryland. Currently, Maryland does not legally specify who may use the title of genetic counselor. Licensure for genetic counselors is an important mechanism the help consumers identify appropriately qualified genetic counseling providers. We support the Maryland and DC Society of Genetic Counselors (MDCGC) efforts to secure licensure for genetic counselors in Maryland as a means toward this end, specifically Senate Bill SB34.

Licensure for genetic counselors is essential to ensuring that genetic counseling providers are appropriately trained and credentialed so that individuals receive proper information and care. Licensure of genetic counselors serves as a title protection to prevent non-genetic counseling trained individuals from attempting to and ordering genetic tests or targeting vulnerable patient populations, such as Medicare patients or patients whose family members are suffering diseases.

From our Foundation’s point of view, we have four genetic counselors on our Clinical Advisory Board, all of whom are active participants and leaders, and one of whom is in Maryland. They help provide genetic counseling to families with recent diagnoses of CdLS in their child, help interpret the genetic testing on their child which are often returned but unexplained, answer genetic counseling-related questions about current and future prenatal diagnosis and ultrasound findings, educate families about any implications for other family members, advocate for the patients and families by giving support and resource information, and provide a framework for our regional CdLS clinics and national CdLS meetings at which they meet with and counsel families individually. In fact, one of our centers of excellence is at Greater Baltimore Medical Center, in which a genetic counselor is significantly involved. We have also participated in clinical projects carried out by a number of genetic counseling trainees, and notified our Foundation families about joining the projects if interested.

The rapid growth of medical genetics has affected virtually all areas of medicine. This specialized expertise aids physicians, patients, and families by providing a significant role in education surrounding the genetic contributions to disease and the implications for an individual’s health – both medical and psychological – and the health of family members. In short, genetic counselors empower providers by providing genetic services and interpretation, which is vital in the goal of precision medicine. As personalized medicine and genomics become increasingly important, so does the role of the genetic counselor as a member of the care team.





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In our opinion, absence of licensure for these highly trained professionals - our genetic counselors - will directly restrict provision of strongly needed clinical genetics services to patients; a need that is ever-increasing in the field of Medicine today.

For these reasons, we respectfully ask that the Committee consider championing/supporting legislation for genetic counselor licensure in Maryland by recommending favorably on **S.B.34/H.B.299, the "State Board of Physicians – Genetic Counselors – Licensing."**

Sincerely,

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