



March 22, 2023

Written testimony to Public Health Committee

on

SB 9 AN ACT CONCERNING HEALTH AND WELLNESS FOR CONNECTICUT RESIDENTS.

The Medical specialties of Dermatology, Ophthalmology, Otolaryngology and Urology would like to thank you for the strong work done by this Committee through the numerous public health bills brought forward this year. We understand and appreciate the struggles the general assembly committees have had in delivering public hearings virtually, and although the pandemic is not as “front and center” as it was at this time last year, we are all still dealing with the persistent remains of this virus. Many physicians still face a tremendous back log of patients who were not able to see a medical specialist during the height of the Covid19 pandemic and has diminished our ability to be as present at the Capitol as we have been years past.

Our commitment to quality health care for Connecticut residents, however, has never wavered, despite the extreme fatigue many in our community are feeling. It is why we continue to testify and submit written testimony on issues that we feel will bring better access and delivery of care to our patients, resulting in better outcomes.

SB 9 An Act Concerning Health and Wellness for Connecticut Residents is an aircraft carrier of a bill, which is loaded with provisions affecting many issues associated with the practice of Medicine. Many of these issues will be addressed by the Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS), an organization that has diligently and tenaciously fought for the safety and well-being of the residents of this state, and we stand in solidarity with them.

There are, however, a few important sections of this bill that we would like to discuss:

Board Certification Credentials

Page 22; Lines 636-640 No hospital, or medical review committee of a hospital, shall require, as part of its credentialing requirements for a physician to be granted privileges to practice in the hospital, that a physician provide credentials of any board certification in a particular specialty.

Board certification (or Board eligibility) should be required. The bedrock of modern, scientific care has always been based on the principle of extensive training and certification of competency. ABMS Board certification serves two roles:

- 1. As an independent evaluation of a physicians’ or specialist’s knowledge and skills required to practice safely and effectively in a specialty.***



2. The Medical Degree and Board Certification are trusted credentials that patients can rely upon when selecting a provider for their needs. The same holds true for hospitals.

For MD specialists it is an important credential for measuring competency and for evaluating and verifying sufficient mastery of necessary knowledge and skills. This competency level would otherwise be difficult, or nearly impossible to evaluate by administrators of organizations, like hospitals and surgery centers, who determine whether or not a physician or surgeon is qualified to provide care.

Medical Malpractice Reform

Pages 25-26; Lines 721-763 Establishes a task force to study [malpractice] reform to incentivize MDs and other health care providers to practice in the state.

For well over 15 years, the MD community has strongly supported Tort reform in Connecticut. Connecticut has remained one of the top three **worst** states to practice medicine, and a state that has remained in the top five states for highest non-economic damage awards. It is no surprise that each year our pool of medical doctor diminishes. Although there are many factors contributing to the loss of these quality, advanced-care physicians in our state, the Medical-Legal environment is certainly an important consideration that leads to the loss of skilled physicians.

Tort reform advances were made almost two decades ago, during the OBGYN crisis that caused these providers to leave the state, or stop the practice of delivering babies, and was addressed by the CGA under the leadership of then Senator Andrew McDonald. Provisions such as a certificate of merit provision were critical in lowering the high medical liability premiums forced on these providers.

Now fast forward to 2023 with an aging population, a physician shortage on the horizon and Connecticut labeled as one of the worst places to practice medicine, and this crisis in the making has still not inspired the passage of **a single piece** of tort reform legislation in the last 15 years. It is no wonder we cannot recruit or retain physicians in this state. How bad must the Crisis be before we act? To throw insult on injury, the committee that is to determine if tort reform is needed only calls for one MD representative. We believe Connecticut deserves better.

In closing, there are many important sections to SB 9, many of which have been addressed by CSMS testimony. We hope that our views and comments will hold merit and continue to provide information of value to this committee and to the residents of Connecticut. Thank you for your time, dedication and commitment to Connecticut Public Health.