

October 15, 2013

To: Members of the House Committee on Regulatory Reform

From: Ann Hoffman, RDN, CDE, CSO

Clinical Dietitian Nutritionist

President of the Michigan Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee:

Hello my name is Ann Hoffman; I am a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist, am Board Certified as a Specialist in Oncology Nutrition, and am Certified as a Diabetes Educator by the American Association of Diabetes Educators. I provide medical nutrition therapy for cancer patients, recovering from surgery, and those receiving chemotherapy and radiation. Additionally, I provide education for patients with diabetes, cardiovascular and lung diseases; as well as those suffering from eating disorders. In summary, I work with the chronically ill. I am also currently the President of the Michigan Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Registered Dietitian Nutritionists work side by side with physicians, nurses, physician assistants, pharmacists, physical therapists, social workers, and are integral members of the health care team. Registered Dietitian Nutritionists engage in the nutrition care process, a systematic problem-solving method that is used to critically think and to make decisions to address and document nutrition-related problems in order to provide safe and effective science-based quality nutrition care.

Registered Dietitian Nutritionists are well equipped to assist the public with weight loss, management and prevention of diabetes, prevention of heart disease, cancer prevention, blood pressure control, eating disorder counseling, etc. by offering dietary modifications and lifestyle management opportunities.

With the explosion of interest in healthy eating and nutrition, consumers have been faced with a dizzying array of products and information. The public has come to depend on the government, through regulation, to

ensure that information is based on science and is being provided by individuals with appropriate education and experience. This is especially true of individuals who have pre-existing medical conditions.

There is great concern with de-regulation of this health profession, since there is risk of more rampant misinformation, especially from those seeking sales of supplements, often based loosely on science and most often based on animal vs. human studies. Public safety is of great concern. In my practice, I see patients who have fallen victim to unsubstantiated claims and unsupported recommendations that, in some instances, have led to a delay in conventional treatment, a waste of resources, and potential for mental and/or physical harm. Documentation of harm is REAL – you will hear more about that during further testimony.

Today, a significant number of health care professions are supporting the maintenance of licensure for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists. They are as follows: The Michigan State Medical Society, the Michigan Osteopathic Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics – Michigan Chapter, the Michigan Academy of Physician Assistants, the Michigan Primary Care Consortium, and the Michigan Association of Health Plans. Given the time constraints, I have provided copies of their letters for your reference.

These health organizations are supporting legal recognition, of the profession that has an established code of ethics, and standards for nutrition education and registration required by the Commission on Dietetic Registration. The Commission on Dietetic Registration oversees more than 70,000 Registered Dietitian Nutritionists nation-wide and has stringent standards set for education, competency and accreditation. Registered Dietitian Nutritionists are the recognized professionals to provide nutrition assessment, education, and intervention know as Medical Nutrition Therapy under Medicare and are the most qualified professionals to provide science-based nutrition information to the public. Maintaining licensure for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists would ensure that the State would identify the most qualified, competent individuals to provide the best care; A duty that the public has come to expect.

In medicine, the focus is "first do no harm"; Unfortunately, some of the inadequately trained or misguided professionals, that are administering nutrition advice to the public, are in a position to do harm, since they are functioning without a consistent code of ethics, with loose interpretation of the science, and often for financial gain, rather than for patient/public benefit. The maintenance of licensure for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists is not intended to eliminate jobs but rather to provide distinction between licensed and non-licensed professionals, while continuing to provide job opportunities for the approximately 150 – 200 dietetic students graduating from accredited universities/internship programs in Michigan, each year.

The public is often confused by the ever-changing science of medicine. Let's attempt to clear some of the confusion by distinguishing the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist with licensure so that he/she can continue to be the leader in disseminating accurate, useful, scientific nutrition information to the patient, the client, and the public.

Thank you for your consideration.