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March 27, 2019

Senate Committee on Health Care  
The Honorable Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson, Chair

RE: Support for Senate Bill 887

Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care,

I am writing to urge your support of Senate Bill 887. I studied to be an acupuncturist because I understand the positive impact it can have on patients' wellbeing. Acupuncture is a relatively low-cost treatment that can be used for a variety of diagnoses, including pain, anxiety and depression, and addiction. I started out in Baltimore in the late 90's treating people in the detention center for drug addiction and withdrawal. Acupuncture is an extremely effective treatment for helping the body detox and heal from drug use- whether street drugs or prescription drugs.

I have clients who use fewer prescription drugs and rely less on OTC drugs and marijuana when they get regular acupuncture treatments. Acupuncture is most effective for most people when they get a series of frequent treatments (1-2x/week for 4-6 weeks) to bring down their pain and help the body heal and recover, then have a series of spaced out treatments (every 10-14 days) to continue to remind the body of its healing ability, and clean up any additional issues. Treatment is even more effective when clients can return as needed, which can range from every few months to every few years.

Acupuncture provides many benefits utilizing every system of the body: it impacts the circulatory, nervous, lymphatic, digestive, endocrine and reproductive systems *and* the musculature of the body and does not destroy a person's liver or kidneys: the organs responsible for processing and clearing medications. It can benefit the whole body.

Prior authorization requirements are a burden for patients because it requires that they get an authorization and initial exam, then return for treatment after the next authorization has been granted. Even if a patient's insurance benefits say they get 12 visits per year, they may only be granted 1 or 2 visits at a time- with paperwork and an authorization required each time. Even for patients who are paying out of pocket because they are still under their deductible may not be approved for acupuncture and their visits would not go against their deductible. In short: the benefits patients think they are getting when they sign up for an insurance carrier do not pan out



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when a Third-Party Administrator denies the benefit or creates unreasonable hurdles to receiving that benefit.

It also creates a burden for providers who must complete even more paperwork, spend time on the phone or online- time that could be spent with patients. Or providers like me who hire staff to deal with the mountain of obstacles between seeing clients and getting paid. Every new layer of administration cut into already narrow margins and threatens the existence of small businesses like mine. SB 887 would help address this issue by allowing patients to use their acupuncture benefit as a low-cost treatment and prevent the need for costlier interventions.

I urge you to vote yes for this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Wendy Childs, L.Ac. AC150966  
President, Earth-Moon Acupuncture, Inc.