

Dear Senate Committee on Healthcare:

I am **writing in support of the proposed House Bill 2619** to allow for genetic counselor licensure. As a board certified genetic counselor, I have provided genetic counseling services for over eight years to patients and their families at OHSU. In this role, I work on a team alongside medical geneticists, nurse practitioners, and other health profession colleagues, providing information and support to families who have or are being evaluated for rare genetic conditions, including infants identified from the Oregon Newborn Bloodspot screening program, and children and adults with special healthcare needs.

Licensure is important for expanding overall access to qualified genetics care, and to improve utilization of care models that incorporate genetic counseling services and maximize available healthcare resources. Our clinics provide care for patients from all over the state, which can sometimes result in long wait times for appointments and (when telehealth is insufficient or unavailable) travel burdens for families to access genetic services including genetic counseling. By nature, the health and psychosocial impacts of a genetic diagnosis also extends beyond our patient to their family members, which is then reflected in care and access needs. For example, from an infant's positive newborn screening result, we often identify other family members who may also have associated health or reproductive risks and would benefit from genetic counseling to understand those risks and available testing or referral options. Furthermore, against the backdrop of a shortage of genetics-trained physicians and advanced practice providers, the clinical utility of genetic testing is rapidly expanding into many areas of medicine, increasing need for the skills that genetic counselors offer to patients and the providers who serve them. By improving recognition of our services, licensure helps to bolster a path for improved reimbursement for genetic counseling services, allowing medical centers to hire genetic counselors to improve patient access, particularly in currently underserved areas of the state. A state licensure requirement additionally would set a high standard for care, giving patients, families and their providers the certainty that providers who represent themselves as genetic counselors have the appropriate training and continuing education to offer information, risk assessment and resources that are accurate and sensitive to the particular needs of a patient and their family.

I strongly support passing HB 2619 to help improve access to the best possible genetic counseling services for Oregonians. Thank you for your consideration.

Anna Dennis, MS, CGC
Certified Genetic Counselor
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