

TESTIMONY AGAINST LD 884, AN ACT TO REPEAL THE BOARD OF LICENSING OF DIETETIC PRACTICE

MARCH 21, 2019

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH COVERAGE, INSURANCE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES

By

Marianne Stevens

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and distinguished ladies and gentlemen of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services. Thank you for the opportunity to address you on this issue.

My name is Marianne Stevens; I live in Vassalboro. I have been a Member of the Board of Licensing of Dietetic Practice for over 15 years. I am here today to speak against LD 884 which would eliminate this Licensing Board. As a Public Member, and not part of the dietetics profession, it has been my duty to ensure that the dietetics needs of the Maine public are met and protected. For several reasons I am concerned that public safety would be at risk if this bill passes.

A year ago I testified before another committee where this Board was slated to be eliminated. At the time, a reason given was that the Board had been inactive. That was not for lack of trying by the Board members. Most often meetings were cancelled because of a lack of quorum because no appointments had been made by the previous Administration to fill vacancies. Since that bill was defeated, we have had an appointment made, held a meeting, and planned for the upcoming year.

I am the Complaint Officer for this Board. For many years we had several complaints at each meeting. The majority of them concerned Continuing Education. At renewal, licensees are asked if they have completed the required Continuing Education. It had been practice to audit 10% of the renewals and ask for the actual list of training and hours obtained. From this 10% there has been a great number that didn't achieve the required hours. Depending on the severity – and previous violations in some cases – disciplinary action was taken. All of a sudden the audits stopped. Without this step, we have no way of knowing that licensees are staying up to date on their professional practice. This is where my concern about patient safety lies. Because so many of the audits were showing deficiencies in education, it concerns me that many Dietitians and Diet Techs are behind on their training. At our last meeting we were told these audits would be resumed. The Board will be reviewing these audits and for that reason alone should be retained.

As the Complaint Officer, I have worked over the years with the Department Staff to resolve any complaint against a dietetics practitioner. During the time that our meetings were cancelled we had a pending complaint

for over 3 years. This was not fair to the person making the complaint nor to the Dietitian who had been named.

On a personal level, my mother is in a Nursing Home and I see constantly how important nutrition is to the residents' care. I am glad to know that their meals are planned by an educated, knowledgeable, and licensed Dietitian. It's very common for anyone to call themselves "nutritionists" these days without any education and training and I would hate to see this practice become even more prevalent. Again, patient safety is at risk if we aren't auditing our licensees.

As I said, I'm the public member and my only concern in this matter is that the Board exists and must be active in protecting the patients of Dietetic Practice. I think it would be a troubling step to eliminate it. I urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 884 and do not eliminate the Board of Licensing of Dietetic Practice.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I'm happy to answer any questions you have.