



AMERICAN OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION

TREATING OUR FAMILY AND YOURS



TO: Members of the Maryland State House Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Maryland Association of Osteopathic Physicians
American Osteopathic Association

DATE: February 22, 2018

SUBJECT: House Bill 1430

The American Osteopathic Association (AOA) and the Maryland Association of Osteopathic Physicians (MAOP) are writing in opposition to HB 1430. This bill allows podiatrists to use the title “physician.” The AOA and MAOP oppose the use of the title “physician” by non-physician clinicians as it is likely to deceive the public by implying that the clinician is engaged in the unlimited practice of medicine.

The AOA represents 137,000 osteopathic physicians (DOs) and medical students, promotes public health, encourages scientific research, serves as the primary certifying body for DOs and is the accrediting agency for osteopathic medical schools. More information on DOs/osteopathic medicine can be found at www.osteopathic.org. MAOP is a professional medical organization that represents over 1,100 DOs providing patient care in Maryland.

Patient confusion about health care providers:

- **Patients deserve to know who is providing their care**, and are often confused about the difference between various types of health care providers.
- **Ambiguous provider terminology and misleading advertisements exacerbate patient confusion.**
- A recent national survey found that **only 41% of patients believe that it is easy to distinguish licensed physicians** from other types of health care providers.¹
- **Patients have an even more difficult time identifying the qualifications of specific professions.** For example, 42% of respondents thought that an optometrist was a physician,

¹ Baselice & Associates, Inc. conducted a survey among 801 adults nationwide from May 27 to June 6, 2014. The overall margin of error is +/- 3.5 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

36% identified psychologists as physicians and 35% thought a doctor of nursing practice was a physician.²

- Moreover, **88% of survey respondents indicated that they would support legislation to require health care advertising materials to clearly designate the level of education, skill and training of all health care providers.**³

These statistics demonstrate that patients need assistance in identifying the credentials of their health care providers, and that they overwhelmingly support truth in advertising laws. Allowing podiatrists to use the title “physician” is likely to confuse patients as it implies that services are being provided by a fully trained and licensed DO or medical doctor (MD).

Maryland’s citizens deserve clear and accurate information in order to make informed decisions about who is providing their care. We urge you to protect patient safety and promote transparency in health care advertising by opposing HB 1430. Should you need any additional information, please feel free to contact Raine Richards, JD, Director, State Government Affairs at rrichards@osteopathic.org or (800) 621-1773, ext. 8199.

Sincerely,



Mark A. Baker, DO
President, AOA



Brian Kahan, DO
President, MAOP

CC: William S. Mayo, DO, President-elect, AOA
Joseph M. Yasso, Jr., DO, Chair, Department of Governmental Affairs, AOA
Thomas L. Ely, DO, Chair, Bureau of State Government Affairs, AOA
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² *Id.*

³ *Id.*