

Testimony on Michigan HB 4135

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Dr. Vaupel and Distinguished Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity to address you on this important issue. My name is Dr. Melissa Barton. I am a board certified by the American Board of Emergency Medicine, ABEM. I am licensed here in Michigan and practice clinically part-time, at Sparrow Hospital Emergency Department. I speak in opposition to House Bill 4135.

By way of disclosure, I am employed by the American Board of Emergency Medicine or ABEM as the Director of Medical Affairs. ABEM is based in Michigan (1,217 ABEM-certified physicians in Michigan) and serves as the national certifying board of emergency physicians. I speak in support Maintenance of Certification, MOC, because I believe patients and hospitals must be able to identify those physicians who are meeting a higher standard for specialty care; simply having a medical license is not enough. House Bill 4135 is the first step in eroding the value of medical board certification.

To payers, the public, hospitals, and other physicians MOC matters because it serves as an external, independent, assessment of competency telling others that certified physicians are engaged in a rigorous program of learning and assessment. For example, in an independent study performed by Harvard researchers, hospitals with ABEM-certified emergency physicians had a lower likelihood of missing a heart attack. Continuing

Medical Education— or CME, is an important to help facilitate learning, but psychological research across many fields (e.g., medical, sports, and vocational skills) has shown that we as humans lack insight as to how well we understand, in particular, complex material. In other words, physicians have tremendous difficulty knowing what we don't know.

The body of evidence is rapidly growing that demonstrates that MOC is associated with better care and serves as an incentive for collaboration in quality improvement. I'm happy to share articles that list numerous studies that support this assertion. The evidence is clear—board-certified physicians practice safer, higher quality medicine; have fewer disciplinary actions by state medical licensing boards; and provide more cost-effective care. MOC improves the quality of care.

Speaking to my own experiences, I took the ABEM recertification exam before I ever worked at ABEM in 2012 as well as met its annual MOC requirements. I did not find the process onerous nor overly burdensome. It allowed me to refresh content that I had forgotten and solidified knowledge about medical advances that have occurred since I finished training. To me, it came with the territory of being a physician. I should be able to take a test demonstrating that I am worthy of the patient's trust placed in me at their hour of greatest need. Additionally, the state should be encouraging me, as a physician, to advance my knowledge in meaningful ways. Instead, *4135 acts as a disincentive* for me to stay up to date in my field, because it would prohibit health systems from recognizing and rewarding my efforts. Not only does this diminish the investment I and my colleagues have made in improving our own practices, but it sends an alarming

message to patients and the health care system at large that physician commitment to lifelong learning and improvement are not valuable. Why would Michigan adopt a system that does not reward excellence?

I oppose House Bill 4135 because it diminishes the most valuable professional credential I can hold, one that is a source of pride for me. This bill would set Michigan apart as adopting *the lowest common standard* for practicing physicians. Michigan would be set apart as winning the race to the bottom. We are better than this. The state of Maryland came to this conclusion just last month after a lengthy and detailed review by a legislatively-created task force that opted not to move forward with any legislation.

In short, high standards for Board Certification *should matter* to you, your families, and to the state of Michigan.

Again, I ask that you oppose this House Bill 4135.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you this morning.

