

Esteemed Chairman, and Members of the Health Policy Committee

My name is Heather Leonard and I am the Director of the National Training Center for American Health Source, the Grand Rapids, Michigan Based Blue Heron Academy. We began operation in 1980 as a free school for women in transition who were victims of abuse, assault, rape, and incest.

38 years later we train hundreds of students per year, primarily women, in allied health care professions and we are licensed by the State of Michigan to train students in phlebotomy, medical assisting, paramedical skin care, medical massage, personal training, holistic health care, and medical and practical acupuncture. Our median job placement rate for graduating students is 93%. We provide allied medical personnel to several major Grand Rapids and West Michigan hospitals. Our graduates work under medical delegation and supervision in hospitals, blood banks, medical offices, and in many other medically supervised environments. *We are part of Michigan's education and job solution.*

In keeping with our founding mission, the Academy, turns no student away. Whether they can afford Academy training or not, if they meet our academic requirements, we train them and assist them in job placement. We do this through our own internal Academy scholarship and work study programs.

We are the first school in Michigan to receive attorney general and LARA approval to teach acupuncture in Michigan and to train medical and acupuncture technicians. Since receiving state approval and licensure for our acupuncture training program we have trained hundreds of Michigan students in this program.

Why would these departments approve and license our acupuncture program only to have Senator O'Brien come along over 15 years later and sponsor a bill to take our current 436 acupuncture technician's livelihoods away?

I am here today to ask that you not undo the good work that we have been doing for 38 years and that you not rob our medical acupuncture graduates of their future. SB 683, the Senator O'Brien acupuncturist bill, proposes to do exactly that.

I ask that this committee instructs Senator O'Brien to meet with me, and my associates, to discuss how our graduates may be included in this bill and their jobs secured. Aren't we all on the same team and working towards the same goal – jobs in Michigan?

Thank you for your kind consideration.

***Heather Leonard, Director
The Blue Heron Academy of Healing Arts and Sciences
2040 Raybrook Street, SE, Suite 104, Grand Rapids, Michigan
616-285-9999 - 888-285-9989***