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March 14, 2017

Representative Hank Vaupel, Chair
House Committee on Health Policy
Michigan House of Representatives
Lansing, Michigan

RE: SB 213

Dear Representative Vaupel and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Academy of Integrative Pain Management (formerly the American Academy of Pain Management), and as a resident of Grand Rapids, Michigan, in support of SB 213, an act relating to telehealth that would safely and appropriately expand access to vital health care services to rural Michiganders.

As you know, the population of our state is widely dispersed geographically; however, healthcare providers, particularly specialists and sub-specialists, tend to be concentrated near the larger urban centers of Grand Rapids and Detroit, becoming further dispersed as one moves to the north. With today's technology, we have the capability of providing high quality health care services to even our most remote populations through the use of telehealth. However, under Michigan's current telehealth law, health care providers may not prescribe controlled substances—vital tools used to treat a vast myriad of health conditions—via telehealth. This prohibition, whether made in error or due to a well-intentioned effort to carefully control prescription medications, is simply not in the best interests of the particular needs of Michiganders.

Many people with pain experience significant pain relief and improved functioning as a result of using controlled substances. This includes, but is certainly not limited to, patients with fibromyalgia, complex regional pain syndrome, migraines, neuropathic pain, ehlers-danlos syndrome, traumatic injuries, and so many more. It also includes patients with cancer, who may not only need access to controlled substances to treat their cancer-related pain, but will also need controlled substances to treat a whole host of other cancer-related health issues. Controlled substances are also used for many conditions unrelated to pain, including for the treatment of panic disorders, attention deficit disorder, depression, epilepsy, narcolepsy, hormone deficiencies, and so many more. Given today's technological advantages and Michigan's exceptionally high-quality health care offerings, Michiganders should have access to high quality care for their individual medical conditions, regardless of where in our great state they choose to live. **Passage of SB 213 is a vital step in improving the public health of Michiganders, as it will expand access to high quality health care while simultaneously implementing protections that will ensure patients have access to follow-up care.**

I respectfully urge the committee to pass SB 213, and I am happy to discuss this issue with you if necessary. Please feel free to contact me by email at kduensing@aapainmanage.org, or by telephone at 209-425-0468.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katie Duensing".

Katie Duensing, J.D.
Assistant Director for Legislative and Regulatory Affairs
State Pain Policy Advocacy Network (SPPAN)
Academy of Integrative Pain Management

About AIPM: The Academy of Integrative Pain Management is the premier organization for all clinicians who care for people with pain. It is the largest pain management organization in the nation and the only one that embraces, as part of its mission statement, an integrative model of care, which: is patient-centered; considers the whole person; encourages healthful lifestyle changes as part of the first line of treatment to restore wellness; is evidence-based; brings together all appropriate therapeutic approaches to reduce pain and achieve optimal health and healing; and, encourages a team approach.

Cc: Senator Peter MacGregor