

June 5, 2014

To: Senator Rocca and Members of the Senate Committee on Regulatory Reform

From: Mary Niester, Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN), MPH

Title: President of the Michigan Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Home Care Dietitian at CHE/Trinity Health Mercy Home Care in Troy

Good afternoon. My name is Mary Niester and I live in Brighton. I am a Registered Dietitian/Nutritionist and I hold a Master of Public Health degree from the University of Michigan. I am a Home Care Dietitian at CHE/Trinity Health Mercy Home Care and I counsel post-chemotherapy/radiation patients, diabetics, kidney disease patients, wound care patients, stroke patients and patients who are unable to swallow and require tube feeding. The patients I care for live in the Oakland County and Port Huron areas.

I am representing the over 4,000 professional and student members of the Michigan Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the majority of whom oppose House Bill 4688.

Licensure is a process by which the state grants time-limited permission to an individual to engage in their occupation after verifying that he or she has met predetermined and standardized criteria, including education and practical training. The goal of licensure is to ensure that the licensees have the minimal degree of competency necessary to ensure that the public's health and welfare are protected.

Licensing of dietitians/nutritionists was not designed to prevent individuals and groups to operate businesses that sell health foods, health products, and dietary supplements. It will not dramatically or immediately reduce the jobs of those who provide general nutrition advice, nutrition information or classes. Nor was it designed to prevent other licensed practitioners who have nutrition services within their scope of practice from continuing to provide those services. The law is quite specific about allowing these individuals and businesses to continue providing their services, as long as they do not use the protected titles of dietitian and nutritionist. It will not threaten the public's health or eliminate the right of consumers to seek out complementary or integrative care. In fact, it will lead those who have a chronic disease to providers whose accreditation and education are recognized by the United States Department of Education.

As Michigan looks to new ways to bring in businesses and money to the state, licensing of dietitians/nutritionists will help to improve the quality of business for the state instead of simply increasing the quantity of unqualified practitioners that will just confuse the public with "fad or celebrity diets", so called "cures" of diseases that have no scientifically verified cures or alterations in nutrition therapies that lead to other chronic disease diagnoses.

I speak for the Michigan Academy board and many members, students and interns who **urge you to oppose House Bill 4688**. Thank you for your time.