



Rep. Julie M. Rogers
Chair
House Health Policy Committee
124 North Capitol Avenue
Lansing, MI 48933
Email: JulieRogers@house.mi.gov

Re: Opposition to HB 4608

Dear Chairwoman Rogers,

As the nonprofit organization that advocates for our diverse health and wellness professionals across the state, we strongly oppose HB 4608 a bill to license Registered Dietitians (members of a private trade group and no one else). While HB 4608 was likely presented as noncontroversial, we can assure you it is not.

In 2014, Michigan repealed its anti-competitive and constitutionally suspect laws that regulated the practice of dietetics and nutrition, which required a license from the government to provide diet and nutrition advice. The legislature repealed the state's onerous regulations in large part due to a report from the Michigan Office of Regulatory Reinvention that found:

"A closer examination of the practices of dietitians and nutritionists calls into question whether true public harm is prevented by licensing the occupations ... it does not appear that licensing dietitians and nutritionists is necessary to protect the public."

What was true then is true today, a monopoly for registered dietitians in the State of Michigan will result in a diminishment of competition and possible violations of the FTC rules against anti-competitive government boards made up mostly of market participants. If passed, HB 4608 would lead to a considerable loss of the nutrition and wellness jobs created in the past ten years and create unnecessary restrictions to Michiganders' freedom to choose healthcare and wellness providers.

The national bipartisan trend for state legislators is to increase workforce participation, remove unnecessary barriers to employment, and allow consumers to access the information, services, and practitioners of their choice.

Here are a few facts, proponents of HB 4608 likely did not communicate with the committee members and staff.

- HB 4608 is an outlier; most states do not regulate the practice of nutrition and nutrition services this way. HB 4608 creates the most aggressive and onerous form of occupational regulation, an exclusive scope of practice for members of one private trade group.

- There is little to no evidence of harm, so strict government licensure is unnecessary. Like all states, Michigan has laws prohibiting the unlicensed practice of medicine and counseling and numerous consumer protection laws to prevent dangerous or harmful behavior. Adding another government agency to police citizens will harm those already underserved by health and wellness practitioners.
- "Medical Nutrition Therapy" is not recognized in most states. Few states even recognize the practice of "medical nutrition therapy." MNT is defined in federal law as services specifically delivered to "a beneficiary with diabetes or a renal disease" "pursuant to a referral by a physician." The MNT definition in HB 4608 is novel, vague, and benefits the specific Registered Dietitian's trade group. ([US Code Link](#))
- There are not enough Registered Dietitians in Michigan to meet the demands of the state. As per the Michigan Academy of Nutrition, there are only 4,000 Registered Dietitians in the state (compared to 140,000 Registered Nurses in Michigan). Restricting nearly all nutrition services to only 4,000 Registered Dietitians in Michigan would have disastrous impacts on the health and quality of people's lives.
- HB 4608 has real-life implications for everyone in Michigan. HB 4608 defines MNT as "Nutrition care services...for the treatment of management of a disease or medical condition." Could someone who is "diagnosed" with "obesity" work with a non-licensed person in the state to be healthy? Or must residents purchase the services of just one of the 4,000 RD's in the state?

Sincerely,

Council of Holistic Health Educators
holisticcouncil.org