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Testimony Before the House Health Policy Committee on HB 5116

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Good morning, Madam Chair, and committee members. My name is Carl H. Alden, and I am the Insurance and Governmental Relations Director for the Michigan Association of Chiropractors. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on some of the problems with House Bill 5116.

A good portion of HB 5116 has to do with mammography, which is outside the scope of practice for Michigan chiropractic physicians, so my comments will not deal with that portion of the bill. Our concerns with HB 5116 are mainly sections 13575 and 13576, with 13576 being most applicable in a chiropractic office. These sections lay out the requirements for a radiologic assistant and limited x-ray machine operator and mandate that any individual who takes x-rays in a chiropractic office, who is not a licensed chiropractor, have one of these new certifications.

The problem with new mandates is that they will raise costs to my members' practices without any benefits for the patient. When costs are raised, they need to be paid for, and that will mean patients will have to pay more in some manner. I know, for myself as a patient, if I need to pay more for the same service, I want to receive a benefit for that added cost. Unfortunately, HB 5116 doesn't provide that.

Unreimbursed mandates will create disincentives in hiring staff, make it harder to recruit chiropractic physicians to practice in Michigan, and possibly even decrease the amount of time a doctor can spend actually caring for patients. Add this on top of increasing regulations faced by healthcare providers of all types from state and federal laws and regulations, as well as the red tape associated with insurance companies' rules, and the administrative burden associated with running a chiropractic or medical practice is exponentially increased.

I'm sure the proponents of HB 5116 will point to increased patient safety as a benefit. I am not familiar with all uses of x-rays in all avenues of healthcare. I am familiar with the practices of chiropractic physicians. In some of Michigan's chiropractic practices, the doctor is the person who takes x-rays, and as such, will not be affected by HB 5116. This is proper, as chiropractic physicians are very well trained in the use of x-rays as a diagnostic tool.

However, in many practices, the doctor will train a staff member to take and develop x-rays under the doctor's supervision, though with the popularity of digital x-rays, the need to develop x-rays is waning. This has worked for the chiropractic profession for many years without endangering the patient. I have been working for the chiropractic profession since 1995, over 26 years, and I cannot recall a patient being harmed by the taking of an x-ray in a chiropractic physician's office. The claim to added safety is illusionary.

I must say that I have had discussions with Jim Cavanagh and am willing to continue discussions to find a solution. However, today, the Michigan Association of Chiropractors must oppose HB 5116 as written, as it will create new regulations and costs, without benefit for chiropractic patients.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I am willing to answer any questions that I can.