



February 4, 2020

Re: HB 4074

Dear Members of the House Committee on Health Care:

I am a pediatrician, and the director of Oregon's MCHB Title V agency for children and youth with special health needs. I write to support HB 4074, which would institute a licensure requirement for genetic counselors in the state of Oregon.

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Genetic factors contribute to 70% of pediatric hospital admissions, and 30% of premature deaths. As we learn more about how genes influence diseases and disorders, physicians have an increasing need for the skills that genetic counselors offer patients.

Genetic counselors educate and support people with inherited health conditions, or who are at risk for them. They are trained to understand genetic testing information, and to communicate that information in language patients can understand. They can help people make well-informed health care decisions.

One in five Oregon families has a child with special health needs. Many of these families need counseling to help them understand the role of genetics in their child's condition, and to make better-informed healthcare decisions. A state licensure requirement would set a high standard for care and provide patients and families certainty that it is met.

Twenty-nine states currently license genetic counselors and that number continues to grow. States that instituted a licensure requirement have seen an increase in the number of practicing genetic counselors. This result is especially important in rural Oregon, where genetic counseling services are in short supply.

For families of children with special health care needs, the need for knowledgeable, professional genetic counseling is clear. I strongly support passing HB 4074 to help improve access to the best possible genetic counseling for Oregonians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "B. Hoffman".

Benjamin Hoffman, MD CPST-I, FAAP  
Director, Oregon Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Needs