

EXHIBIT 2
DATE 2/11/2011
HB 396



HB 396

Board of Medical Examiners

Testimony

Business and Labor Committee

By Mary Anne Guggenheim, M.D.

Chairperson Arntzen and members of the committee, my name is Mary Anne Guggenheim. I am a physician and member of the Montana Board of Medical Examiners. We want to voice our support for the passage of HB 396.

This straightforward bill simply asks that health care professionals make clear the nature of their training. The label "Dr." is legitimately used by anyone with postgraduate training that leads to a doctorate degree: this may be in history, or mathematics, or art history, or, in the health care field in physical therapy, sports rehabilitation, optometry, psychology, nursing, nutrition, as well as in medicine.

A colleague of mine who practices in Bozeman told me this recent anecdote: He entered the room to meet a new patient and introduced himself as Dr. Center, asking "How can I help you? The patient replied, oh, the other doctor was just here." A male nurse, Tom, had been in to do an initial history and check the blood pressure. It reminded me that when I first practiced medicine 40 plus years ago I would sit down with a patient in the hospital, only to be asked: "Honey, do you know when the doctor is going to see me?"

Hardly any of my friends understand the difference in training and scope of practice between an optometry doctor and an ophthalmologist – do you?

This is not a turf battle – this is simply recognizing that people with many different kinds of training and skills work in the health care industry these days. On TV we see lots of doctors in white coats giving us advice and writing prescriptions. In real life, most health care professionals are clear about what they are and are not trained to do – but not everybody. The intent of this bill is simply to help patients know something about the person who they hope can help them.

I support this bill and hope you will too. I am available to answer any questions you may have as you deliberate this bill.

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*The duty of the board goes beyond licensing and regulation.
We are obligated to protect health care consumers.*

Board Quick Facts

- License and regulate
acupuncturists, emergency
medical technicians,
nutritionists, physicians,
residents, telemedicine
physicians, physician assistants
and podiatrists
- 9,923 active licensees
- Receive about 170 complaints
each year
- Takes an average of 30 days to
get a license to practice
medicine in Montana
- Are 13 Board members. 12
Board members are appointed
by the Governor and confirmed
by the Senate. One member is
selected by the Montana
Academy of Physician Assistants.
- Board members serve staggered
four year terms
- Board meets minimum of six
times/year

Board Contact Information

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What is a State Medical Board?

The Montana Board of Medical Examiners' primary responsibility and obligation is to protect health care consumers through proper licensing and regulation of physicians, telemedicine physicians, residents, physician assistants, podiatrists, nutritionists, acupuncturists and emergency medical technicians.

The ability to practice in one of the licensed occupations is not an inherent right of an individual, but a privilege granted by the people of a state acting through their elected representatives. The public is protected from the unprofessional, improper and incompetent practice through laws and regulations. It is the duty of the Board of Medical Examiners to regulate the practice.

Medical Board Structure

Board membership is composed of volunteers who are charged with upholding the practice acts. Twelve voting members are appointed by the governor and one nonvoting member is selected by the Montana Academy of Physician Assistants.

The board is attached for administrative purposes to the Department of Labor and Industry. Funding comes from licensing fees. Any fines imposed are deposited into the general fund. There are six licensing and program staff, including an executive director.

Licensure

Assembling a quality health care workforce to meet the needs of the public begins with licensure. Through the licensure process, the state ensures that individuals have appropriate education and training, and that they abide by recognized standards of professional conduct.

Regulation

The board is charged with the responsibility of evaluating when a licensee's professional conduct or ability to practice medicine warrants modification, suspension or revocation of the license to practice. Board members meet on a monthly basis, devoting hours of time and attention, to oversee the practice by reviewing complaints from consumers, information from hospitals and other health care institutions, and reports from government agencies. The board has the power to further investigate a complaint and can impose some form of discipline, such as mandated continuing medical education, medical treatment, or seek to restrict, suspend or revoke a license.