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EXHIBIT NO. Angela F. Darden, MD, FCAP  
DATE 3-22-11 Kerrie D. Erick, MD, FCAP  
BILL NO. HB 416 Christopher S. Nease, MD, FCAP  
Duane A. Schultz, MD, FCAP

March 21, 2011

Senate Business, Labor & Economic Affairs Committee  
Montana Legislature

Re: Support for HB 416

Honorable Members of the Senate Business, Labor and Economic Affairs Committee:

I am a practicing pathologist in Billings, and ask for your support of HB 416, which will extend confidentiality requirements for quality assurance programs to medical practices and physician offices.

Currently, institutions such as hospitals and nursing homes have these protections that allow for open discussion of issues to improve patient care. However, medical group practices do not share this same protection. HB 416 will make the umbrella whole, and provide the necessary confidentiality for quality assurance activities regardless of the patient treatment setting.

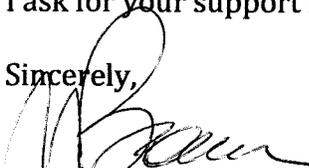
Passage of HB416 is of utmost importance now. Medical diagnosis and treatment continues to move into the outpatient/ambulatory setting. Medical groups and hospitals are integrating more to provide more comprehensive patient care, and need quality assurance programs that can span the full continuum of care. HB 416 will encourage physicians and other providers to look at quality assurance from a more global perspective, and work to improve comprehensive patient care, rather than focus solely on hospital based episodes of care.

In my own practice, I cannot implement a robust quality assurance program because of the concerns over discoverability. Physicians, and more importantly patients, are currently hindered from experiencing the benefits of an open process of quality assurance that will lead to better, safer patient care. HB 416 will remove the barrier that currently impedes the development of quality assurance activities in the ambulatory setting.

Quality improvement activities need to be focused on systems of care, rather than brief episodes of care. Only in this manner will we truly be able to improve the overall health of our citizens and reduce the cost of medical care.

I ask for your support in passage of HB 416.

Sincerely,

  
Michael S. Brown, MD

Yellowstone Pathology Institute, Inc.

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