Testimony to the Maryland Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee Regarding Senate Bill 580 for Thursday, March 5, 2015

Good afternoon Madame Chairwoman, Mister Vice Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Jeff Millison and I am the Academic Director of the Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine department at the Maryland University of Integrative Health. Maryland University of Integrative Health (MUIH), formerly Tai Sophia Institute, is the only university in Howard County and one of the nation’s leading academic institutions for natural medicine with a student body of more than 1000.

I am speaking today, on behalf of MUIH, in regard to bill 580. First of all, thank you, Senator Pugh for introducing the bill. We are in support of the bill with the amendment that the minimum hours be changed to 2000, so that the training for PT’s is consistent with the educational standards for acupuncturists. Our reasoning is straightforward. The AG in his August 2010 opinion stated that acupuncture and dry needling are in fact “indistinguishable”…and essentially the same thing. In addition, the definition of dry needling in 10.38.12 is profoundly broad…it states that it can be used for the treatment of anything except 3 marginal applications (detoxification, stress relief and smoking cessation). The AG’s opinion that acupuncture and dry needling are essentially synonymous combined with the incredibly broad definition of its application leads to a simple conclusion: that the minimum Dry Needling training for PTs to ensure public safety needs to be equivalent with the education of an acupuncturist. At MUIH, our Master of Acupuncture program is currently 2449.75 hours. If you subtract the bioscience hours out of the curriculum, which many PTs would be exempt from because of their education, it leaves 2000 hours. We need to point out that we have had dozens of nurses, doctors and PTs take the Master of Acupuncture program over the last 25 years. Many of them are exempt from many of the bioscience courses in the curriculum but they in fact take the entire rest of the required hours in order to become safe and effective practitioners of acupuncture…..a technique that, again, was stated as synonymous with Dry Needling by the AG.

Acupuncture is a system of medicine that utilizes needles to achieve therapeutic effect. That means needles are actually inserted into internal muscle and other tissue of the body. We are licensed to use invasive needles as are only a few other medical practitioners through their Maryland Practice Acts. Other practitioners, like physical therapists and chiropractors are not.

In summary, Acupuncture is clearly, according to Maryland law, a medical practice. The AG correctly identified Dry Needling and Acupuncture as one in the same thing…and thusly, the education needed to safely practice the technique unequivocally needs to be on par with that of an acupuncturist: which again is approximately 2000 hours.

Thank you, Senators, for your time and consideration regarding this very important issue of public safety. I’m happy to answer questions you may have now or after the hearing.

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