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TO: Ohio Senate Finance Subcommittee

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Ohio Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Ohio dietitians are strongly opposed to the plan in HB 49 to restructure the health care licensing boards and we oppose the plan in all versions of the budget bill to put dietetics under the medical board. We value the purpose of licensure – to protect the public. We ask that the Finance Subcommittee recommends returning the Ohio Board of Dietetics to its independent status and return of funding for the second budget yet.

It is impossible for us to see the need for this legislative effort. Ohio's healthcare licensing boards have been independent and working well with no taxpayer funds for many, many years. What is the reason for trying to fix something that is not broken and provides the protection that Ohioans have depended on?

The reasons given for this upheaval have included three, none of which are based on evidence. First – cost – the Board of Dietetics and the other health care boards are self-sufficient and our licensees are willing to pay for licensure to provide public protection. No GRF funds are used. Second – supposed increase efficiency. I know that the Ohio Board of Dietetics and its staff are very efficient – they manage 4000 licensees with two staff members and have had no complaints about timely response. Third - supposed concern that Ohio's system does not align with modern clinical practices and guidelines. I have no idea where this idea originated and **PROTECTING THE PUBLIC** is the purpose of licensure, not to “align with modern clinical practices”.

Along with the others in our coalition, we have been talking with legislators and found almost no support for consolidation. We were told that the consolidation was to be removed from the budget in the House. That did not happen. There were some winners and losers in the House version, and unfortunately, dietetics is probably the

biggest loser. I am not sure why we were unable to adequately convey the danger to Ohioans that lies ahead if unqualified persons are permitted to practice dietetics.

The Ohio Board of Dietetics cannot be put under the Medical Board. The Advisory Council identified in HB 49 has no qualifications for members, no duties and no power! In practice, dietitians work closely with physicians, but our scope of practice is very different and not well understood by physicians. The Medical Board has to address issues of immediate physical harm, e.g. opioid crisis, while the Dietetics Board deals with longer term harm – e.g. improper advice for a patient with diabetes. We know that our issues will NEVER rise to the level that they will be dealt with by the members of the Medical Board – none of which would be dietitians. As a result, our dietetic licensure is essentially “gone” – and I know our licensees are not going to want to pay a fee each year for NO public protection. We already have registration – national certification that gives us title protection. We went into licensure in 1987 to Protect the Public – not to give more licensure funds to the Medical Board!!!

Over the last 18 years in each session of the General Assembly there has been a bill (last session SB 194) initiated by the alternative practitioners to make it impossible for the Dietetics Board to stop questionable practice against Ohioans. This group has been unsuccessful in the past because we were able to show legislators the harm that could occur if these people were able to practice freely. I am sure these practitioners are “jumping for joy” with this budget proposal because they know, as we do, that the Medical Board will NEVER get to their issues and they can do whatever they wish to unsuspecting Ohioans who expect the State to provide protection. These providers have been looking for a “safe harbor” and they have found it in HB 49 ☹ Just last month there was publicity about cancer quackery and it often involves nutrition quackery – example – Steve Jobs from Apple ☹ About 6 weeks ago there was a story about poisoning from turmeric tea.

As a result of our research of other state dietetic licensing boards, it is obvious why Ohio’s Dietetic Licensure Law is a “model” for other states. Ohio investigates cases of possible violation and does significant education to prevent violations. The Board does take appropriate action when needed. Very few if any other states do any significant follow up on complaints. ☹

We are asking the Finance Committee to return the Dietetics Board to its previous independent status and restore funding so that it can meet the agency priorities and can function to protect the public – the purpose of licensure.