



The North Carolina Acupuncture Licensing Board (NCALB) wishes to acknowledge the time commitment and work the Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee has put into writing and establishing guidelines for assessing the operation of the North Carolina Occupational Licensing Boards (OLA).

We are cognizant of the concerns that the Legislative committee has for insuring that the OLAs are working efficiently and effectively to protect the citizens of North Carolina. In reviewing the findings of the committee, we have concerns regarding the findings related to the NCALB. In reviewing the list of OLA's that the Committee recommends for consolidation it is noted that the NCALB is the only Board of Professional Health Care providers on this list. We wish to offer some insight into an area, where we feel that the Oversight Committee may not have had all the resources and information available regarding this medical profession. There are two areas that we would like to address.

The NCALB regulates a medical profession. It is a health care system that has specific diagnostic parameters and treatments that are unique and offer safe, effective health care to the citizens of North Carolina. Effective regulation can only come from those within the profession who have specific in-depth knowledge of the profession.

The North Carolina Board of Governors licenses Acupuncture Colleges in the state of North Carolina which must meet the same educational standards as Duke, UNC, etc. The four year Master's degree program approved by the NC Board of Governors is an extensive training program in Asian Medicine Theory, Western Bio-Medicine, and includes a Supervised Clinical Internship of more than 800 hours. The assertion that the NCALB should be subsumed by another board that regulates occupations in the same industry does not acknowledge the specific and professional skills and training of the Licensed Acupuncturists. Although the North Carolina Board of Medical Examiners and the North Carolina Chiropractic Board both regulate medicine, each of these medical modalities has distinct diagnostic and treatment parameters. Just as it would be vastly

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inappropriate and possibly dangerous for MDs to regulate Chiropractors, it would be equally inappropriate and dangerous for MDs to regulate Acupuncturists, as each of these medical professions is trained in a distinct, yet effective medical system.

Secondly, while agreeing that the value of regulation must merit the cost, the Board would assert that the cost of regulation of this profession has been carefully considered and approved by the General Assembly and the NCALB has clearly demonstrated their ability to manage the board, both professionally and financially, since its creation in 1993.

There has been no past instance of the NCALB asking the state for funding and there is no reason to believe such an instance would occur in the future. The NC Legislature created this board in 1993 and stipulated that the board must be self-supporting. The NCALB has regulated the profession and has been self-supporting for 21 years. At no time has the NCALB needed financial assistance from the state.

There are various other reasons which demonstrate that effectiveness would be compromised by consolidating the Acupuncture Board with another Board. For the purpose of this response, the Board would like to reserve its right to supplement this response at a later time, if necessary.

IN SUMMARY:

As the NCALB regulates medical professionals who offer health care to our citizens, there are significantly more egregious consequences by a consolidated board. Consolidation of the NCALB would provide less protection for the North Carolina citizen. If the regulation of this medicine was conveyed to those persons who are not educated in Acupuncture and Asian Medicine, regulation of important medical practice issues would present an unacceptable risk to the North Carolina public sector. The NCALB respectfully asserts that there is not another entity regulating occupations in our industry that would have the skills necessary to regulate the practice of Acupuncture in North Carolina. As such, we respectfully request to continue in this proven manner, in which the public is well-protected, at no cost to that public or to the institutions of the State of North Carolina by the North Carolina Acupuncture Licensing Board.