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April 24, 2017

Louisiana State Senate
Senate Health & Welfare Committee
The Honorable Fred H. Mills, Jr., *Chair*
The Honorable Regina Barrow, *Vice-Chair*
P.O. Box 94183
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

RE: Oppose SB 194 – Regarding Physician Advertising Board Certification

Dear Committee Members:

On behalf of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), I am contacting you to oppose SB 194 and ask that you not advance this bill. If enacted, SB 194 would create a pathway for physicians to advertise themselves as “board certified” by entities that do not meet widely-accepted educational and training standards for board certification. ASPS is the largest association of plastic surgeons in the world. Because it is ASPS’s mission to advance the highest standards of training, ethics and physician practice, we require all our members to be certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery.

“Board certified” indicates certification by an American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) or an American Osteopathic Association (AOA) member board, and the term is important to patients and the public. When patients seek care, board certification assures they are engaging a physician with significant direct, independently-accredited training and demonstrated, validated skill in their specialty. In addition to ABMS and AOA member boards, certifications from some high-quality non-ABMS/AOA boards (hereafter referred to as “equivalent boards”) can be advertised. This has been allowed by some states because these equivalent boards also require their diplomates to have complete, independently-accredited training that is equal in duration, breadth, and scope to the training required by ABMS/AOA Boards. That level of training is only available in ACGME-accredited residency programs.

Residency training is necessary to become a truly proficient specialist, with a specific anatomic area of expertise. ACGME-approved programs require standardized instructor qualifications, a minimum number and variety of types of procedures performed, as well as progressive patient care responsibility leading up to board eligibility. Because of these high standards, ACGME

accreditation assures quality in American medicine. It is for these reasons that the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners voted on April 10, 2017 to require completion of ACGME training in the specialty named in a board's certificate in order for a physician to advertise as "board certified."

Unlike the previously mentioned equivalent boards, other lesser-quality non-ABMS/AOA boards do not require their members to complete an ACGME-accredited residency in the specialty named in a certification. Instead, they self-create their own criteria, designating fellowship requirements and training qualifications, and outline their own standards for the acceptable level of training to be certified. The result is undertrained and underqualified practitioners being given a credential that represents the opposite in the public's mind.

Under SB 194, the current indication of quality associated with the term "board certified" would be destroyed, because "board certified" would mean only that the physician is a verifiable member of an existing board. By removing all threshold standards for potential boards, this legislation will mislead Louisianans and expose them to underqualified providers.

This is truly a matter of patient safety. Patients deserve to know that the board certification is a true indicator of a physician's training and skill. Lowering the bar in the use of the term "board certified" muddies those choices and places patients at risk for negative consequences. ASPS believes strongly that opposing SB 194 protects Louisiana's citizens.

We thank you for your consideration of our comments. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please feel free to contact Patrick Hermes, Senior Manager of Advocacy and Government Affairs at phermes@plasticsurgery.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debra Johnson MD". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Debra" and "Johnson" connected by a single stroke, and "MD" written separately to the right.

Debra Johnson, MD
President, American Society of Plastic Surgeons