

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 2053

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH

Hearing Date: March 24, 2021 8:00 AM

Emily Magness

TSGC

San Antonio, TX

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to request your support of this bill for the licensing and regulating of genetic counselors in Texas: As a Genetic Counselor in the state of Texas, I support the Texas Society of Genetic Counselors (TSGC) and their commitment to ensuring Texans have access to high quality care surrounding genetic testing. High quality genetics care is achieved by the licensing of genetic counselors. Genetic counselors are essential members of our healthcare team. Our profession helps patients by providing education, counseling, and support to patients and families facing life-altering inherited conditions. Genetic counselors help identify appropriate genetic tests, coordinate test orders, and interpret genetic test results – all roles which guide management of patients' medical care.

Licensing of genetic counselors achieves the following:

Protects patients from potential medical harm. Genetic counselors are highly trained healthcare professionals. If genetic counselors are not licensed, individuals who lack appropriate genetics training could claim to be genetic counselors while providing substandard care, endangering the health of countless Texans.

Improves health spending efficiency. Nearly 17.5 million Texans are projected to benefit from the results of genetic analysis. However, genetic tests are costly with national spending on genetic tests expected to reach \$15-25 billion by 2021. Nearly 25% of all genetic tests are ordered incorrectly, by clinicians who have insufficient knowledge of genetic testing. Licensed genetic counselors have the expertise to guide appropriate ordering of genetic testing, thereby minimizing wasteful spending and combating health care fraud and abuse.

Contributes to sustained investment in access to care during COVID-19 or future epidemics. The COVID-19 pandemic has ushered widespread integration of telehealth in Texas medical offices and hospitals. Telehealth will likely remain in Texas even after the threat of COVID-19 has passed. Historically genetic services have been concentrated in major metropolitan areas. Increased telehealth services have allowed Texans in rural communities, who previously had limited access, to obtain genetics appointments at a distance via telehealth. Licensing of genetic counselors will ensure all Texans, no matter where in the state they reside, receive high quality care from trained professionals.

With the rapidly growing number of available genetic tests and the steadily increasing complexity of genetic test technology and result interpretation, the need for licensing of genetic counselors has never been more urgent.

Thank you for your consideration.

Emily Magness, MS, CGC
Certified Genetic Counselor

Daniel Bland

Self - Medical Student

Houston, TX

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to request your support of this bill for the licensing and regulating of genetic counselors in Texas: As a medical

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student in the state of Texas, I support the Texas Society of Genetic Counselors (TSGC) and their commitment to ensuring Texans have access to high-quality care surrounding genetic testing. High-quality genetics care is achieved by the licensing of genetic counselors. Genetic counselors are essential members of our healthcare team; they help patients by providing education, counseling, and support to patients and families facing life-altering inherited conditions. Genetic counselors help identify appropriate genetic tests, coordinate test orders, and interpret genetic test results – all roles which guide management of patients' medical care.

Licensing of genetic counselors achieves the following:

Protects patients from potential medical harm. Genetic counselors are highly trained healthcare professionals specializing in genetic conditions and genetic testing. If genetic counselors are not licensed, individuals who lack appropriate genetics training could claim to be genetic counselors while providing substandard care, endangering the health of countless Texans.

Improves health spending efficiency. Nearly 17.5 million Texans are projected to benefit from the results of genetic analysis. However, genetic tests are costly, with national spending on genetic tests expected to reach \$15-25 billion by 2021. Nearly 25% of all genetic tests are ordered incorrectly, by clinicians who have insufficient knowledge of genetic testing. Licensed genetic counselors have the expertise to guide appropriate ordering of genetic testing, thereby minimizing wasteful spending and combating health care fraud and abuse.

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With the rapidly growing number of available genetic tests and the steadily increasing complexity of genetic test technology and result interpretation, the need for licensing of genetic counselors has never been more urgent.

Thank you for your consideration.

Daniel S. Bland, B.S.

M.D. Candidate '22

Callie Diamonstein, Ms.

self

Dallas, TX

Genetic testing is increasing used in medicine and also increasing offered direct-to-consumer and via fraudulent entities. We need genetic counselors to be licensed to give the public confidence in that their genetics provider is authentic and knowledgeable.

Heather Lucas, Mrs

Self- genetic counselor

Tyler, TX

Passing this will allow for increased access to genetic care which is already scarce. As a genetic counselor I. A rural area, I am currently limited in my ability to see patients that desperately need this care. Licensure will increase access for these services.

Joshua Lucas

Self / Engineer

Tyler, TX

The current lack of licensure for Genetic Counselors (GC) is detrimental to patients requiring genetic evaluation and counseling

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in that it can greatly limit availability, especially for those not near a metropolitan area. First, it limits availability by discipline. Due to the requirement for doctor oversight of genetic testing, a GC who is trained to diagnose across a variety of genetic disorders can be limited by their doctor's discipline. E.g. a GC working with a OB/GYN can only see patients who are pregnant or wishing to become so. In addition the doctors authorizing these tests often rely on the genetic expert's guidance, as this may be outside the scope of the doctor's training. This genetic expert often is the GC requesting the testing. Second, lack of licensure restricts availability by distance. Many needing genetic counseling, but who do not live near a metropolitan area may face insurmountable hurdles in terms of time and resources to get the proper care they need. These hurdles inevitably discriminate against those of lesser economic means. Lastly, because genetic counseling can be an early diagnostic tool, it has the potential to lower health care costs by reducing the likelihood of late stage interventions for otherwise undiagnosed diseases. In order to remove these economically discriminatory barriers, to provide greater availability of care to patients in need, and provide reduced healthcare costs by early intervention, I request HB 2053 be passed, allowing licensure for Genetic Counselors.

Eric Diamonstein

self

Dallas, TX

Genetic counselors provide an incredible service to patients. They provide patients with a legitimate, knowledgeable resource to discuss matters regarding genetics. Additionally, they provide support to patients in difficult circumstances when they need counseling the most. They are an extremely important component of the health system and should be recognized as such!

Abigail Yesso

Self - Genetic Counseling Student

Houston, TX

To whom it may concern:

My name is Abigail Yesso, and I am a resident of Houston, TX. As a Texas resident, I am writing to express my support for state licensure for genetic counselors in Texas and I respectfully request that you also support this important effort. The licensure of genetic counselors will help protect patients and ensure genetic counselors are able to provide quality healthcare.

Genetic counselors are healthcare professionals with specialized graduate degrees and expertise in the areas of medical genetics and counseling. As is the case with other healthcare professionals, genetic counselors offer a unique set of skills and services due to their specialized training and provide genetic counseling in a variety of settings including but not limited to Oncology, Obstetrics, Pediatrics, Neurology, and Cardiology. We are trained to use medical and family histories to identify families at risk for inherited conditions, spanning from hereditary cancer and cardiac conditions to prenatal and pediatric indications to name a few. They are equipped to explain inheritance and natural histories, quantify chances for occurrence and recurrence, review available testing options, and discuss management, prevention, and research protocols with patients.

With my graduation around the corner, I am happy to say that I will be staying in the great state of Texas to provide genetic counseling services for my first position as a genetic counselor. My education has allowed me to feel confident in providing the highest quality of genetics services, interpret genetic testing results appropriately, and ensure patients receive accurate information regarding genetics. I am passionate about the expansion of genetic services to underserved populations, which is a task that is often difficult to undertake as a genetic counselor without the protections state licensure provides. This bill would not only support the growth of this field but also help to make genetics services as accessible as possible to the people of Texas.

Genetic counselors are unique in their ability to educate and support individuals and families who are facing various challenges due to a diagnosis of a genetic counseling disorder. Licensing genetic counselors will help ensure patients will receive high-quality genetics services and aims to reduce patient harm.

I hope you will support this effort and please contact me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

Abigail Yesso

amyesso@gmail.com

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985-805-7445
Houston, TX 77054

Pia Summerour
Texas Society of Genetic Counselors
Arlington, TX

Dear Rep Klick, My name is Pia Summerour. I am a certified genetic counselor (CGC) in Arlington, TX. Thank you for supporting Bill 2053. This bill will ensure that the citizens of Teas receive the safe competent care that CGCs can provide. In addition, this bill may help to provide increased access to health care overall. CGCs have the necessary knowledge and skills to order genetic testing for patients in the absence of any other providers and can tremendously improve access to health care in rural areas. Passage of HB 2053 will ensure public safety by requiring CGCs to be licensed.

Megan Hoenig
TSGC
Houston, TX

I support genetic counselor licensure in the state of Texas. As a genetic counselor myself, I know this bill will protect Texans from harm, ensure accountability for Texans, and save healthcare dollars.

Sarah Huguenard
Texas Society of Genetic Counselors
Houston, TX

I support this bill, as it protects Texans from medical harm and improves access to healthcare for underserved populations.

edwin jenevein, dr.
Self
Dallas, TX

Genetics have become so extensive, complicated and important that Texans need to served by trained reliable certified genetics counselors. By focusing on the rapidly growing volume of this scientific information that for a busy physician is hard to keep up with, they will have the skills to be a critical member of the care team. In addition their training will be important in communicating the meaning these data to patients.

Rachel Franciskovich, CGC
TSGC
Houston, TX

Please consider passing this bill forward as it will allow access to patients of Texas to have reliable access to board certified genetic counseling services.

Kelly Moyer
TSGC
Austin, TX

This bill would allow me to operate as a provider extender, to allow for more institutions to hire us, be able to bill for our

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services, and protect the public. I hope you will pass this bill.

Daniel Riconda, Mr.

Self, Genetic Counselor

Houston, TX

I ask that you support this bill as written. Protection of the public from improperly trained genetic counselors is an important priority.

Thank you,

Dan

Christine Golub

Self

San Antonio, TX

Support!

Kathryn Jenevein

Self

Dallas, TX

Genetic information is being used more and more in healthcare decisions. People MUST have legitimate, knowledgeable, trained genetic counselors to give them accurate information. Please pass HB 2053. Thank you.

Megan Pursell

Self

Humble, TX

I support this!

Aida Hanover

TSGC

Houston, TX

I'm a patient supporting genetic counselors

John Hanover

Tsgc

Montgomery, TX

Patient standing for genetic counseling

Jesse Juarez

SELF

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San Antonio, TX

I believe it is of great benefit to Texans to allow the services of genetic counselors to be licensed and regulated, which would spread the availability of the services, and ensure the quality of care being received. Preventative medicine can save thousands of dollars in medical care and can greatly improve a person's quality of life. Genetic screenings and counseling can identify possible diseases and propose possible treatments years before a disease can ever present itself. It will greatly improve the care Texans can receive and I look forward to when it joins other great fields of medicine made available through licensing and regulation.

Charlotte Dooley

Self

Dallas, TX

Genetic information is being used more and more often in healthcare decisions. People NEED TO have legitimate, knowledgeable, trained genetic counselors to give them accurate information when they make healthcare decisions. Please pass HB 2053 to ensure that genetic counselors have met a minimum standard to be providing these services. Thank you.

Rachel Bluebond

TSGC

Houston, TX

As a genetic counselor serving oncology patients in Texas for the last 7 years, I can personally attest to the value of licensing genetic counselors for the protection of patients. I have examples of patients coming in to see us because someone tried to sell them supplements to fix genetic mistakes (not possible) to patients who received "genetic counseling" for the wrong condition based on the genetic testing result. There is serious patient harm that can be caused by someone claiming to provide genetic counseling without appropriate training, especially as genetic information is integrated into more medical care. Further, Texas is one of the few states with a major medical industry that does not protect patients with licensure of genetic counselors, even among our southern counterparts. Lastly, this lack of licensure hurts our medical system as a whole as these providers are unable to bill insurance for the service; requiring hospital systems to not charge for the service, for a more expensive provider to charge for the service, or patients to pay out of pocket for the service.

Karen Edwards

SELF and future generations

Dallas, TX

HB 2053

PLEASE pass this bill! Decisions regarding genetics and counseling are frequently made and must be made with the knowledge that those providing this information have the education and background to accurately advise.

Ashley Campfield

Self

Dallas, TX

My newborn son died from a rare genetic disease and I have had to speak with a number of genetic counselors and geneticists regarding our family's health and how to proceed for my other children. Genetic counselors should be required to have a license and a minimum amount of schooling in order to be able to discuss such life and death situations with families seeking answers and guidance on health decisions.

Jane Hancock

self

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Dallas, TX

Genetic information is being used more and more in healthcare decisions. People must have legitimate, knowledgeable, trained genetic counselor to give them accurate information.

Please pass HB 2053.

Thank you

Lila Pipkin

Self

Houston, TX

Non-licensed genetic counselors can give misinformation. A license should be required for the safety of our state.

Please support genetic counselors' licensure in the state of Texas!

Adasia Ritenour

Self - Genetic Counseling Student

Houston, TX

Genetic counselors are healthcare professionals with specialized graduate degrees and expertise in the areas of medical genetics and counseling. As is the case with other independent healthcare professionals, genetic counselors offer a unique set of skills and services due to their specialized training and provide genetic counseling in a variety of specialties including but not limited to oncology, obstetrics, pediatrics, neurology, and cardiology.

They are trained to use family and medical histories to identify families at risk for inherited conditions, spanning from hereditary cancer and cardiac conditions to prenatal and pediatric indications to name a few. They are equipped to explain inheritance and natural histories, quantify chances for occurrence and recurrence, review available testing options, and discuss management, preventions, and research protocols with patients. Genetic counselors complete a two year masters level program that has rigorous accreditation standards to ensure they have sufficient genetics knowledge prior to entering the workforce. Genetic counselors also receive in depth counseling training to provide emotional support to their patients.

Genetic counselors are unique in their ability to educate and support individuals and families who are facing various challenges due to a diagnosis of a genetic disorder. Licensing genetic counselors will help ensure patients receive high quality genetic services and aims to reduce patient harm. Even with the intense training genetic counselors receive, it is important to enact legislature to protect our patients from potential harm and guarantee genetic counselors continue to act in the patients best interest.

Other states have passed similar licensure bills to protect their state's community and ensure high quality care to all citizens. I encourage you to add Texas to the growing list of states because each and every Texan deserves to have a positive medical experience and be protected.

Kathryn Jenevein

Self

Dallas, TX

I support the passage of HB 2053 as I believe qualified genetic counseling is a wonderful and increasingly critical health care service!

Patrick Halpin

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Self

Dallas, TX

Support! We need knowledgeable counselors who can provide accurate information and educated advice

Rebecca Littlejohn

TSGC

San Antonio, TX

To the House Committee on Public Health,

I support HB 2053 to licensure and regulate genetic counselors to protect Texans from harm, allow Texans more access to genetic counseling services and to improve health spending efficiency. As the available number of genetic tests and medical knowledge on genetic conditions grows, licensing highly trained individuals like genetic counselors will ensure that Texans receive accurate information from licensed professionals not someone claiming to be a genetic counselor. When genetic tests are misinterpreted by individuals who lack appropriate genetics training, patients and their families undergo potential medical and financial harm. Our Texas families should not have to worry about whether they are receiving accurate information or if the genetic counselor they saw was licensed and regulated especially during challenging medical times. While other states including Texas' neighbors have access to licensed genetic counselors, Texas has fallen behind. All Texans should have access to a licensed genetic counselor in Texas. Texas is a leader in the nation in many areas, so let us continue to lead by licensing genetic counselors. I hope you will consider supporting this bill.

Sara Mokhtary

Texas Society of Genetic Counselors

Dallas, TX

Genetic Counselors are vital healthcare providers. Licensing will allow patients in Texas to receive high-quality genetics care by appropriately-trained professionals. Please support HB 2053.

Linda Hanover, Retired teacher

Self - retired teacher

Montgomery, TX

Our granddaughter has worked very hard to get her advanced degree in Genetic Counseling. Now the state needs to do their part in the licensing of these very essential counselors.

William Hanover, Retired businessman

Self - retired businessman

Montgomery, TX

My grandson's wife has worked very hard to get her advanced degree in Genetic Counseling. Now the state of Texas needs to do their part in licensing!

Jane Jenevein

Self

Dallas, TX

I fully support genetic counselors' licensure in the state of Texas (Bill #2053). It is crucial to have reliable information when

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making significant life decisions.

Mary Schleier

Self

Dallas, TX

Genetic counseling is being used in more and more health care decisions. As a breast cancer survivor, I have used a genetic counselor in the past, and as a Parkinson's patient with family history, I am likely to use one in the future. I cannot imagine trusting anyone but a trained, licensed, reliable counselor. People must have knowledgeable, trained genetic counselors to give them accurate information for making decisions about their health and the health of their children. Please pass HB 2053. Thank you. Mary Schleier

Rosemary Rogers

Self, Genetic Counseling Student

Houston, TX

Licensure for genetic counselors is essential to expand access to care in Texas. So many patients are not able to access the care they need, and many have to drive over ten hours across the state to access genetic health services. Genetic counseling licensure would help build a healthier Texas.

Catherine Buchanan

TSGC

Austin, TX

As a Texas genetic counselor, state licensure will allow the services I provide countless families to be recognized. Recognizing genetic counselors and allowing genetic clinics to bill for our time and services will directly contribute to the growing demand for genetic services state-wide and nation-wide. This may also spread awareness of genetic counseling which will allow for better patient access to services and will also influence future generations of students that are interested and entering the field. Licensure is necessary in order to grow the field of genetic counseling which will in turn alleviate some of the stress on genetic clinics that are so common today.

Christina Hoppe, Director of Public Policy

Children's Hospital Association of Texas

Austin, TX

Support

Edgar Bright

Self

Dallas, TX

People should be allowed to have access to genetic counseling so they can have the knowledge

Susan Burek

Retired

Austin, TX

I am in favor of this bill. Thank you for sponsoring it.