Opposing Maintenance of Certification (MOC) and the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact

To the Editor:

We have a shortage of physicians in Rhode Island and nationwide. Unregulated private examination companies are making it harder for doctors to care for patients with no evidence that their certifications improve patient care. Over 85% of physicians nationwide are against the Maintenance of Certification (MOC) program of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) that is increasingly being required to practice medicine. This program is contributing to burnout and early retirement, aggravating the shortage of physicians for a handsome profit (ABMS net assets of one billion dollars.)

We need to ensure that MOC remains “voluntary” and remains unlinked to licensure in RI. The “Patient Access Bills,” Senate Bill 0745 and House Bill 5671, codify our current licensure process, ensuring that private companies such as the ABMS and the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) remain unlinked to medical licensure in Rhode Island. This will help Rhode Island compete for physicians when 7 states have passed similar laws and an additional 7 have similar legislation pending. Also the American Medical Association (AMA) has created a very strong “Right to Treat,” anti-MOC model bill that many states will be introducing next year.

Also, defeating The Interstate Medical Licensure Compact (Compact), Senate Bill 0269, will ensure that licensure in Rhode Island remains free of the ABMS-trademarked MOC. It also ensures that unelected private monopolies are not allowed to supercede RI's statutory law and prevents the imposition of undefined fees on RI. The Compact is a very complicated 17-page bill that raises many other concerns including rules of renewal, loss of due process, and MOC requirements. Of the 50 states, 17 are against it and 13 are not considering it. Many of the states that passed the bill have amended it to protect their physicians and their state. Over 260 RI physicians have signed a petition against the Compact.

Most physician do not find the MOC “voluntary” and do not think that the ABMS should have influence in any form of licensure. Even the company itself states their certification should not be linked to licensure or hospital privileges. Many physicians are planning early retirement due to increasingly burdensome requirements including the MOC program.

I see hundreds of patients on a regular basis, as do my colleagues. Our patients’ care is our utmost priority, including staying up to date in medicine. Continuing Medical Education, required for licensure, keeps physicians on the cutting edge of science. The MOC fills doctors’ time with busy work for private “vendors” and steals time from patient care, at a very high cost to both doctors and society.

Please urge your representatives and senators to vote “YES” for Patient Access bills: Senate Bill S0745 and House Bill H5671 and to vote “NO” on the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact bill – Senate Bill S0269.

David Kahn, MD
grandfathered ABPN diplomat
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