

October 17, 2013

Economic Affairs Interim Committee
Attention: Pat Murdo
PO Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Members of the EAIC,

I am writing to express my support for clinical laboratory science practitioner licensure. Twenty years ago I felt strongly about the need for state licensure, and was part of the efforts made to pass the legislation. I am pleased to have the opportunity to again explain the value and need for licensure and how it protects the health and welfare of the community as well as the individual.

I am a licensed clinical laboratory scientist (CLS), and the Deputy Laboratory Director at the Montana Public Health Laboratory, where I have been employed for over 28 years. I currently serve as President-Elect of the American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science (ASCLS), and represent over 9000 clinical laboratory science members throughout the nation. ASCLS fully supports the state licensure of clinical laboratory practitioners, because it requires that all personnel performing clinical laboratory testing meet specific educational and national certification requirements that are appropriate to assure that the laboratory testing data used in diagnostic and treatment decisions is high quality, accurate and reliable.

Because Montana has state licensure for clinical laboratory science practitioners, we can be assured of the following:

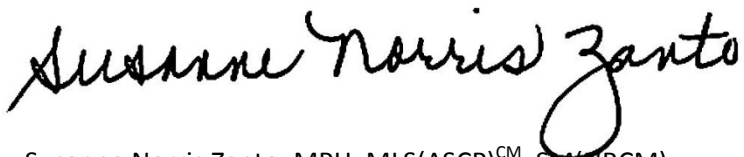
- Hiring officials must hire credentialed clinical laboratory practitioners. Certification, although highly recommended, is a voluntary process, and without licensure, uncredentialed individuals could be hired to work in hospital laboratories and clinics.
- Practitioners maintain their skills and competence through continuing education. I took my national certification exam in 1975, and have practiced clinical laboratory science for over 30 years. During my career, the practice of clinical laboratory science has become increasingly complex and new technologies are constantly being introduced. Without licensure, there would be no requirement for me to remain current in the practice of clinical laboratory science.
- Incompetent practitioners can legally be barred from providing services to the public.
- Practitioners will have Associate (CLT) or Bachelor (CLS, CLSp) degrees and appropriate training to assure the production of accurate and reliable laboratory test results. The personnel standards in the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) are minimal, and allow high school graduates to perform laboratory testing. Montanans deserve better.
- The health and welfare of Montanans, and Montana communities are protected. Clinical laboratory science is one of the few healthcare professions that have a dual purpose – not only does the high quality performance of laboratory testing protect the health and welfare of the individual patient, but these same laboratory tests are used to protect the health of the community by assuring that infectious diseases are properly diagnosed and not transmitted to others. As a public health professional, I recognize the need for accurate results for tests for

pertussis, antibiotic resistance, Hepatitis B, Chlamydia and tuberculosis, and we need highly qualified, licensed practitioners to assure those accurate results.

Each of you expects that your physician would be licensed and would maintain competence through continuing education, and that incompetent individuals would be removed from practice. Why would you expect less of the individual providing the objective data on which your physician bases diagnostic and treatment decisions for yourselves, your family members, and for the public?

I urge the Committee to maintain the Board of Clinical Laboratory Science Practitioners as is, so that highly competent practitioners continue to protect the health and welfare of Montanans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susanne Norris Zanto". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping 'Z' at the end.

Susanne Norris Zanto, MPH, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}, SM(NRCM)
ASCLS President Elect 2013-14
Helena, MT 59601