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It is my privilege to represent the Minnesota Dietetic Association today in its support of the existing structure, function and performance of the Minnesota Board of Dietetics and Nutrition Practice. The Minnesota Dietetic Association is the largest professional organization of nutrition and health professionals in Minnesota. Our membership is predominantly made up of Licensed Dietitians and Nutritionists. The 1,700 members of the Minnesota Dietetic Association are food and nutrition experts. Licensed dietitians and nutritionists are uniquely qualified to deliver cost-effective prevention, wellness and disease management services. Licensed dietitians and nutritionists must meet rigorous academic and training requirements in addition to completing at least 900 hours of post- baccalaureate practice experience before taking a national registration examination.

Minnesota was one of the first states in the nation to license dietitians and nutritionists. The original licensure objective of protecting the public from harm caused by unqualified providers is unchanged --- and arguably more critical now than ever before. Greater access, better health, better care and lower costs are the top priorities for Minnesota's healthcare industry. Qualified, ethical providers are essential to achieving these goals; anything less results in more complications, costs and liabilities. Healthcare organizations and payers rely on the Minnesota Board of Dietetics and Nutrition Practice to identify qualified providers. With the proliferation of unaccredited online and fly-by-night nutrition courses, the role of State Board oversight is even more critical to clearly distinguish appropriate academic standards from fraudulent diploma mills. Moreover, the Minnesota Dietetic Association also relies on the Board to verify that their licensed members meet educational and practice standards. Additionally, state boards have jurisdictions that our national organization is not able to provide.

Another important aspect is that Licensure is self funded and therefore budget neutral. The Minnesota Board of Dietetics and Nutrition Practice is funded by fees collected from licensed dietitians and nutritionists. No tax payer dollars are used. At \$50 per year the renewal fee is the lowest of the health boards. This underscores the Board's efficient operations and sound financial management. The Minnesota Dietetic Association also appreciates the collaborative relationship our Board maintains with the other health boards. By centralizing back office functions, the health boards further control administrative costs.

The Minnesota Dietetic Association recognizes value in the Sunset Act and the Sunset Commission's charge to evaluate the Board's performance and merit. Periodic assessments promote organizational accountability and continuous improvement. The exercise has given us additional confidence in the high performance of the Board.

**In summary, the Minnesota Dietetic Association supports the following:**

- ✓ Continued Board existence and licensure of dietitians and nutritionists to protect the citizens of Minnesota and ensure that qualified, licensed practitioners provide nutrition services.
- ✓ Continued use of fees collected by Licensees for licensure activities and not transferred to general fund.
- ✓ Continued use of Administrative Services Unit (ASU) as the administrative function for all health boards and continued centralization of office functions for the boards.
- ✓ Approval from the Office of Electronic Technology to proceed with the Health Licensing data management system.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important health and nutrition issue for our state.