

Pennsylvania Society of Radiologic Technologists  
Testimony  
House Professional Licensure Committee  
February 27, 2018

Good morning Chairman Mustio, Chairman Readshaw, and members of the House Professional Licensure Committee. My name is Mardi Sawyer and I am the Director of Public Health Sciences Curriculum at Penn State Hershey College of Medicine. I am also the secretary of the Pennsylvania Society of Radiologic Technologists (PSRT) and I appreciate the opportunity to testify today about House Bill 1545, sponsored by Representative Cutler.

Pennsylvania is home to over 17,000 medical imaging technologists who work in the health care industry. PSRT works on behalf of these professionals and represents both radiologic technologists and the patients they serve.

PSRT is an affiliate of the American Society of Radiologic Technologists (ASRT), and together we have been working with the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists (ARRT), the Society of Diagnostic Medical Sonography (SDMS), and the Society of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging (SNMMI) to advocate for House Bill 1545. We believe that the best way to ensure the safety of every patient being exposed to ionizing radiation or who is undergoing a medical imaging procedure is by making sure that the professionals operating the medical imaging and radiation therapy equipment are properly certified and credentialed.

Undergoing diagnostic or therapeutic procedures is often stressful and scary for patients. HB 1545 will reassure patients that their treatments are being administered safely and properly by qualified technologists.

HB 1545 provides for the regulation, certification, education, licensure, and scope of practice standards for professionals performing sonography, fluoroscopy, limited x-ray machine operation, magnetic resonance imaging, nuclear medicine, radiation therapy, and radiography. Radiological procedures, including x-rays, radiation therapy, and nuclear medicine, use ionizing radiation, which must be administered correctly, or it could be dangerous and extremely harmful for patients.

The bill does provide exemptions for certain licensed practitioners, including physicians, dentists, chiropractors, podiatrists, dental hygienists, resident physicians and students attending medical school or medical imaging educational programs, and those performing sonography procedures that are limited in scope.

Licensure legislation is needed because Pennsylvania is one of a small number of states that does not have specific laws for medical imaging and radiation therapy personnel. Current standards are located in several statutes and regulations. The Department of State oversees some qualifications for medical imaging professionals and recognizes board certification, but there is no consistency in how these laws and regulations are applied. HB 1545 will remedy this situation and create clear, consistent, and transparent regulations for medical technologists in a variety of specialties.

Across the country there are examples of unqualified staff members using medical imaging equipment on patients. In fact, in 2016 a doctor in State College was charged with two felonies - failure to provide radiation protection and improper use of a monitoring device - because he allowed an unqualified staff

member to operate medical imaging equipment on at least 15 patients. Unfortunately, in states with inconsistent medical imaging personnel standards, situations like this are not uncommon.

To combat similar occurrences, HB 1545 creates a board of medical imaging and radiation therapy to establish qualifications for licensure and standards for radiologic technologists, sonographers, radiologist assistants, nuclear medicine technologists and limited x-ray machine operators. Board members will be experts in various imaging or therapy disciplines and the make-up of the board will include a diagnostic medical sonographer, a radiologist assistant, a magnetic resonance technologist, a nuclear medicine technologist, two practitioners who supervise medical imaging, one of whom is a radiologist, a radiation therapist, a radiographer, and a member of the public. The board will establish education and continuing education requirements to help make sure that all professionals operating medical imaging equipment are trained on the latest technology.

The state must also ensure that these medical professionals are properly certified by an accredited organization. There are several organizations that offer certification in medical imaging fields, but some are not accredited and do not have clear and transparent processes for their certification or examination process. Patient safety is paramount, and one of the best ways to ensure patient protections is by only accepting certifications issued by accredited organizations like the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists, Nuclear Medicine Technology Certification Board or American Registry of Diagnostic Medical Sonography.

The Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy Board will also be able to investigate incidents where patient safety may be at risk and take disciplinary action if necessary. This will ensure that medical practices hire educated personnel who are properly licensed and know how to effectively operate imaging equipment.

PSRT, ASRT, ARRT, SDMS, and SNMMI believe that Pennsylvania's citizens are entitled to protections from improperly performed medical imaging and radiation procedures. We encourage the Professional Licensure Committee to take the first step to protecting Pennsylvanians by passing HB 1545.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.