



## AMERICAN ACADEMY of DERMATOLOGY | ASSOCIATION

1445 New York Ave., NW, Suite 800  
Washington, DC 20005-2134

MAIN: (202) 842-3555  
FAX: (202) 842-4355  
[www.aad.org](http://www.aad.org)



November 15, 2019

The Honorable Joanne M. Comerford, Chair  
The Honorable John J. Mahoney, Chair  
Joint Committee on Public Health  
General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
24 Beacon Street Room 130  
Boston, MA

Dear Chairpersons Comerford and Mahoney,

On behalf of the 234 members of the Massachusetts Academy of Dermatology (Mass. Academy) and the nearly 14,000 members of the American Academy of Dermatology Association (AADA), we are writing to share our support for H 1861. This legislation is an important step toward ensuring transparency of health care provider qualifications.

Dermatologists diagnose and treat more than 3,000 diseases, including skin cancer, psoriasis, immunologic diseases and many genetic disorders. As physicians who are on the front lines fighting skin cancer and treating numerous skin diseases, we believe those who regulate and deliver medical care have an obligation to inform the public of the qualifications and limitations of the persons providing their care prior to treatment. All health care practitioners should identify or disclose their degree or field of study, board-certification (if any) and licensure to each patient.

As dermatologists, our utmost concerns are quality patient care and patient safety. Quality patient care includes evaluating a patient's needs and current condition, selecting an appropriate course of treatment, and providing adequate information and follow-up care. It is not only essential to provide the highest quality care, but it is just as important that patients understand and are comfortable with who is providing those services.

George J. Hruza, MD, MBA, FAAD  
President

Bruce H. Thiers, MD, FAAD  
President-Elect

Jane M. Grant-Kels, MD, FAAD  
Vice President

Susan C. Taylor, MD, FAAD  
Vice President-Elect

Marta J. Van Beek, MD, MPH, FAAD  
Secretary-Treasurer

Daniel D. Bennett, MD, FAAD  
Assistant Secretary-Treasurer

There is a wide spectrum of training and expertise among health care professionals. In a clinical setting, it is often impossible for patients to know whether the person providing their care is a physician, nurse, physician assistant, pharmacist, dentist, or dental hygienist. This creates a great deal of confusion for individuals receiving health care. Our patients have the right to know the credentials and the level of training of that person making the important medical diagnosis, pushing medications into an intravenous line, using a scalpel, or pointing a laser at their face, torso, arms, or legs.

A recent survey conducted by the American Medical Association's Scope of Practice Partnership (SOPP) confirms increasing patient confusion regarding the many types of health care providers - including physicians, nurses, physician assistants, technicians and other varied providers. The survey revealed:

- 47 percent of patients incorrectly believe an optometrist is a medical doctor;
- 39 percent of patients believe a nurse with a "doctor of nursing practice" degree is a medical doctor;
- 55 percent of patients believe it is difficult to identify who is a licensed medical doctor and who is not by reading what services they offer, their title and other licensing credentials in advertising or other marketing materials.

H 1861 would require advertisements for health care services to specify the type of license held by the practitioner. Further, the practitioner would post and affirmatively communicate their licensure and wear a photo identification name tag that includes their name and large bold lettering specifying the type of license held.

Additionally, the SOPP survey reinforces that patients want more transparency regarding the credentials and qualifications of their health care providers:

- 88 percent of patients believe only medical doctors should be permitted to use the title "physician;"
- 79 percent of patients support state legislation to require all health care advertising materials to clearly designate the level of education, skills and training of all health care professionals promoting their services.

The Mass. Academy and AADA strongly support the physician-led, team-based model of health care delivery and recognize the vital role all providers play in the health care delivery system; however, ambiguous provider nomenclature, misleading advertisements, and the myriad of individuals one encounters in each point of service exacerbate patient uncertainty.

Many patients are reluctant to ask their health care professional about one's training and certification during a visit. H 1861 would help set the record straight and would provide patients with the necessary information concerning who is providing their health care. On behalf of our organizations, we look forward to working with you to ensure the bill's passage. For further information, please contact Lisa Albany, director of state policy for the AADA, at [lalbany@aad.org](mailto:lalbany@aad.org) or (202) 842-3555.

Support H 1861  
November 15, 2019  
Page 3 of 3

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George Hruza". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "G" and a distinct "Hruza" ending.

George J. Hruza, MD, MBA, FAAD  
President  
American Academy of Dermatology Association

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ira L. Skolnik, MD". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "I" and a distinct "Skolnik" ending.

Ira L. Skolnik, MD, PhD, FAAD  
President  
Massachusetts Academy of Dermatology

CC: Members of the Joint Committee on Public Health