

Dear Senator Flanagan and Senator Wolf,

I urge you to support and ask Senator Welch to vote **S2352, “An Act Relative to the Practice of Acupuncture”**, out of committee favorably as soon as possible to get this bill to the floor for a vote.

1. S2352 makes acupuncture services more accessible to all families in every income bracket in the Commonwealth. It requires most private health insurance plans to cover acupuncture for the treatment of acute and chronic pain, nausea, PTSD and addiction. This gives broad access to another viable, clinically effective, treatment with virtually no side effects, for patients who haven't been effectively treated with conventional allopathic medicine, or who desire to *first* utilize a non-pharmacologic, non-surgical intervention for pain management.
2. This bill provides insurance coverage for acupuncture, which is recognized by the Joint Commission Pain Management Standard as a first line, non-pharmacologic intervention for acute and chronic pain. The CDC has recently issued a statement outlining the risks of opioids for pain management, and had called upon practitioners to prescribe less. This is particularly important for the people of the Commonwealth, as our state is in the throes of an opioid addiction epidemic.
3. S2352 calls for the creation of a commission at the Department of Public Health to find ways to integrate acupuncture with allopathic medicine to enhance health care quality and reduce health care costs.

Our state is in the midst of a crisis of opioid addiction. We urgently need alternatives to pharmaceutical treatment of pain and a broad range of substance abuse interventions. The CDC reports that “Deaths from prescription painkillers have reached epidemic levels in the past decade” and recommends Health Insurers “Increase coverage for other treatments to reduce pain”. Acupuncture is a proven best first line treatment for acute pain and chronic pain and is recognized as such by the Joint Commission Pain Management Standard. It has proven effective in substance abuse treatments since the 1970s. We hope that insurance coverage will expand acupuncture accessibility, thus reducing the use of pharmaceuticals and consequently many of the addictions caused by overuse.

Acupuncture is cost effective. A report by Center for Health Information and Analysis predicts an increase in premiums of \$0.38–\$0.76 per month. According to a study in Washington State, costs actually decreased for acupuncture and complementary medicine users in high disease burden groups due to a reduction of more expensive conventional care. In these studies, inclusion of acupuncture did not significantly escalate health care costs, perhaps decreasing costs if preventive care, whose results are hard to factor in, were included.

It is time for acupuncture services to take their proper place in the broader system of health care delivery and to be compensated as such. The people of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts deserve to have access to clinically proven, safe, and cost effective alternatives to opioid medications for pain.

Thank you for your help, time and for voting **S2352, An Act Relative to the practice of Acupuncture**, out of the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing speedily to get this bill to the floor for a vote.

Respectfully,