

Testimony of Gale Maleskey, RD, LDN, MS
House Democratic Policy Committee Public Hearing
April 9, 2012

Good afternoon, members of the House Democratic Policy Committee. My name is Gale Maleskey. I am a Registered Dietitian with my own private practice, Integrative Nutrition, in Bethlehem, PA, and I am here today to ask that you work on legislation that would recognize Registered Dietitians as providers in all health insurance plans in our state.

We are licensed healthcare providers in this state, yet insurance companies in this state do not consistently recognize us as providers under their plan. With Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, one of the biggest insurers in this area, for instance, I was told that I could not even apply to be a provider as a private practitioner. I would need to be working under the auspices of a medical doctor. That limits my practice.

As a result, I currently work with only one insurance company, Aetna, and the rest of my clients are asked to pay out-of-pocket. While some are more than willing and able to do this, I believe that people who need my services the most are those least likely to be able to pay out-of-pocket. That includes working families who are looking for specific, accurate nutritional guidance for conditions like childhood obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, cancer and heart disease. I would love to be able to accept more patients with a variety of insurance coverages. Public health messages about healthy nutrition are important, but they do not have the impact or the ability to change behavior the way that a one-on-one individualized nutrition treatment plan does.

I love what I do for a living--help people live healthier lives and eat better—and I am hoping that you, as legislators, can help to make this a reality. This is an issue that has been going on for as long as I can remember, with no resolution. I believe my clients deserve consistent access to nutrition counseling without having to pay out-of-pocket.