

Hearing Testimony Template

Good morning/afternoon. My name is _____. I am a _____ (e.g., RD, MD, healthcare consumer) from _____ and I am here today asking that you work on legislation that would recognize Registered Dietitians as providers in all health insurance plans in our state.

Statement of the problem from your perspective (possible examples are provided):

1. RDs: we are licensed healthcare providers in the state, yet insurance companies do not consistently recognize us/credential us as providers under their plans. Creates barriers to access to cost-effective services that could save our state money and improve the health of our citizens. Also creates health disparities among our citizens. Include a personal story.
2. MDs: we want to be able to refer patients to RDs but lack of provider status and coverage from insurers is a barrier; patients cannot receive the right care at the right time. Include a personal story.
3. Consumers: barrier to access to services; nutrition counseling provided by other providers does not meet my needs; have achieved better outcomes when working with RD vs other providers. Include a personal story.

Why is recognition of RDs by insurance plans important/rationale (possible examples provided):

1. RDs: licensed healthcare providers in the state, meaning the state has already recognized the fact that we are qualified providers of nutrition services; nutrition experts; best (ie, effectiveness, cost) qualified providers of nutrition services; evidence-based practice
2. MDs: not the best use of my time or expertise to provide this service; I want to be able to coordinate care for my patients and pull together a team of specialists who can best meet my patients' needs; my patients ultimately may not receive services if I don't have the time to do it and I can't refer my patients to RDs
3. Consumers: nutrition counseling provided by other providers does not meet my needs; have achieved better outcomes when working with RD vs other providers; I want access to the healthcare providers with the necessary skills and expertise to guide me in improving my health so I can enjoy a good quality of life, not miss days from work, etc.

Potential supporting data to include in your rationale:

1. There is a multitude of data that demonstrates the cost-savings of RD-provided nutrition counseling. As just one example, a study conducted at Massachusetts General Hospital demonstrated a savings of \$4.28 for each dollar spent on MNT. MNT services provided by RDs are less expensive than physician office visits and hospitalizations for complications of disease such as diabetes that could be averted by nutrition interventions. Also, nutrition interventions can reduce and even eliminate the need for costly long-term medications to treat chronic diseases.
2. Nutrition and diet are known to be associated with seven of the top ten leading causes of death in the United States today, including the Big Three: heart disease, cancer and stroke. Diet and nutrition are also factors in other chronic conditions such as pulmonary disease, diabetes, liver disease, arteriosclerosis and kidney disease. Not to mention the role of nutrition in curbing the obesity epidemic facing both children and adults across our state. Lack of access to RD-provided medical nutrition therapy services certainly has played a role in the escalating prevalence of these conditions and the associated growth in the costs of treating them. Opening up access to these services from the nutrition experts can help to rein in spiraling health care costs in our state.

NOTE: Think about financial impact of these diseases (if not well managed) on the economy (lost wages, absenteeism, worker productivity); think about impact on quality of life of the citizens of PA.

3. Access to medical nutrition therapy services provided by registered dietitians addresses medical concerns of great importance to enrollees in health plans. The "Nutrition and You: Trends 2011"

survey reveals that just over one in ten Americans are “very interested” in the services that dietitians provide. This number jumps to one in three for African-Americans, a group that has higher rates of obesity and diabetes. This same survey notes that six in ten consumers say they would be interested in a consultation with a registered dietitian if it were covered by health insurance.

4. MNT is a medical service that has been proven to be safe and medically effective. The key to the effectiveness of these services is the registered dietitian as the provider of the service. The Institute of Medicine has previously acknowledged the registered dietitian as the “single identifiable group of health-care professionals with standardized education, clinical training, continuing education and national credentialing requirements necessary” to be recognized as providers of these services.

Summary:

Once again, I ask that you work on legislation that would recognize Registered Dietitians as providers in all health insurance plans in our state. Our citizens/we deserve consistent access to these licensed healthcare professionals.