

**Written Testimony Submitted by Krista Yoder Latortue, MPH, RD, CSP, LDN**

House Democratic Policy Committee Public Hearing

April 9, 2012

Since I am unable to testify in person, I am submitting my written testimony to be entered into the hearing's record. My name is Krista Yoder Latortue. I am a Registered Dietitian and am in private practice in Philadelphia and I am asking that you work on legislation that would recognize Registered Dietitians as providers in all health insurance plans in our state.

Registered Dietitians are licensed healthcare providers in the state, yet insurance companies do not consistently recognize us/credential us as providers under their plans. This creates barriers for the public to access cost-effective services that could save our state money and improve the health of our citizens. It also creates health disparities among our citizens based on which insurance plans they have.

I personally see many patients through Independence Blue Cross Personal Choice, Independence Blue Cross PPO, and Keystone Health Plan East for medical nutrition therapy. Each of these health insurance plans covers six free visits with a Registered Dietitian per calendar year. Patients greatly benefit from these visits by learning and implementing healthy lifestyle changes that improve their nutritional status and health. My practice specializes in child nutrition and we are proud of our 75% success rate of improving the weight status of children and 95% success rate in decreasing picky eating and acceptance of healthy foods.

Patients who do not receive coverage for nutrition counseling by a Registered Dietitian under their health insurance plans are unable to access personalized nutrition counseling from a reliable source without paying out of pocket. This is a great disservice to members and does not allow them to optimize their health potential. Additionally, it disproportionately limits the healthcare access of members who are unable to afford the out of pocket expenses.

It is essential that all health insurance plans in Pennsylvania recognize Registered Dietitians as providers and cover nutrition counseling provided by a Registered Dietitian. Registered Dietitians are licensed healthcare providers in the state, meaning Pennsylvania has recognized the fact that we are qualified providers of nutrition services. Our services to patients are grounded in evidence-based practice guidelines-and we are the MOST qualified providers of medical nutrition therapy.

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.