



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF  
FAMILY PHYSICIANS  
STRONG MEDICINE FOR AMERICA



ILLINOIS ACADEMY OF  
FAMILY PHYSICIANS

*Devoted to Advocacy, Education & Action*

April 11, 2013

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), representing over 105,900 physicians and medical students nationwide, and the Illinois Academy of Family Physicians (IAFP), representing 4,500 physicians and medical students in the state of Illinois, I am writing to you and the Illinois General Assembly to oppose SB 2187, which would allow psychologists to prescribe medication in the state of Illinois without adequate medical training. The AAFP & IAFP **oppose legislation that would allow any provider without adequate medical training to practice medicine. This proposal removes the patient-safeguard of limiting prescriptive authority to fully trained, licensed physicians.**

### **Education & Training Differences – A Psychologist Is NOT an MD**

Physicians, nurses, psychologists, physicians' assistants, pharmacists -- all health care professionals want to help their patients achieve optimal health. All health professionals undertake different levels of education and training in order to receive their degrees and certifications. Physicians' education and training are the most rigorous and comprehensive of all the medical providers. Psychiatric physicians, for example, must complete 12 years of education and training before practicing medicine. When compared to psychologists' training, which averages 462 hours, most of which can be obtained through online courses, there simply is no question as to which professional is more qualified to prescribe medication.

### **Patient Safety**

Psychologists are trained in social and behavioral sciences, not medicine. **By removing restrictions and allowing psychologists to prescribe medication, the state of Illinois would effectively be creating two tiers of care.** This bill would allow a less qualified medical professional to lead a patient's treatment without collaboration with a medical doctor, which puts the patient at risk. Psychologists are important members of our mental health system; they are skilled at psychological assessment and psychotherapy. However, psychologists do not have the medical training to support their interest in prescribing psychotropic medications. For this reason, a psychologist is not a substitute for a medical doctor when it comes to ensuring patient safety.

### **Fragmentation Is Costly and Dangerous**

There is no question that our health care system is complex, especially with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. The current system is fraught with hazardous mistakes and costly duplication, much of which is a direct result of the fragmentation that already exists. Many provisions in the Affordable Care Act stress patient-centered health care teams, as they

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represent the optimal form of care for patients. AAFP has been one of the earliest supporters of the Patient Centered Medical Home model of care, because it requires physicians, physician assistants, nurses, and other members of the health care team to work together in coordinated, efficient manners to ensure high quality, low cost care with the best rate of clinical outcomes. Allowing psychologists to prescribe psychotropic medication further splinters our health care system by removing delivery of mental health care services from the health care team.

The consideration of allowing psychologists to diagnose, prescribe and treat, without physician involvement puts patients at risk, and undermines the movement of the health care system towards coordinated team-based care.

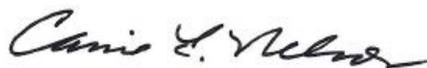
The AAFP commends the leadership of the Illinois State Legislature in its quest for a positive path to better and more accessible health care. The current collaborative practice requirements between physicians and psychologists in Illinois, and in 48 other states for prescribing of psychotropic medications are models for patient safety, and support patients in their quest for the highest quality and most efficient care. For these reasons, **we strongly urge the legislature to defeat S 2187.**

Thank you for your consideration. If you have questions or need further information, at the AAFP, please do not hesitate to contact Michelle Greenhalgh, Manager of State Government Relations, at [mgreenhalgh@aaafp.org](mailto:mgreenhalgh@aaafp.org) or (202) 232-9033. At IAFP, please contact Gordana Krkic, CAE, Deputy Executive Vice President of External Affairs at [gkrkic@iafp.com](mailto:gkrkic@iafp.com) or (630) 427-8007.

Sincerely,



Glen R. Stream, MD, MBI, FAAFP  
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