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The case for opening Act 188 to allow for education of chiropractic students in Pennsylvania

“It is long overdue that Pennsylvania’s Doctors of Chiropractic stop looking in the rear view mirror of the chiropractic ‘vehicle’ and start looking through the windshield and driving our ‘vehicle.’ In other words, we need to respect, but stop obsessing on the past. Instead, we must replace that seeming fixation with a laser-like focus on and commitment to the future.”

The strategic importance of Pennsylvania allowing, by law and regulation, for the education of chiropractic college students under the supervision of PA - licensed DCs cannot be overstated. Students having successful externships, internships, etc. are THE key to ensuring an adequate supply of well-educated and thoroughly trained Doctors of Chiropractic to serve Pennsylvanians’ current and future health care needs.”

*Raymond J. Benedetto, DC, DACNB
PCA President*

PCA is keenly aware that there are currently rumors ***being deliberately circulated***, as well as very questionable second-guessing from some individuals regarding the opening of Act 188 of 1986 (The PA Chiropractic Practice Act) to allow for the opening of Chiropractic Colleges and the education of US Chiropractic students in Pennsylvania (i.e. internships and externships) under the supervision of PA-licensed DCs. Right now, Pennsylvania is one of the ONLY states that students cannot do their externships at, depriving students the ability to finish their training in the state they wish to practice. This also deprives our 4054 licensed doctors from passing on their wisdom and knowledge to the next generation, while allowing the doctors to “test drive” students as potential associates in their practices. This current model is not good for anyone.

House Bill 1737, The PA Chiropractic Education Bill, addresses these issues and is attached for your reference, as are also 2 letters of support from the ACA and USOC. The bill also has support from several CCE accredited Chiropractic Colleges which wish to start externships in one of the largest states in the USA. A similarly worded Senate bill is expected to be introduced shortly.

Here are the facts, in context of confusing and misleading rhetoric from some corners of our profession:

1. Any legislator can attempt to “open” or modify any Pennsylvania law or regulation for modifications at any time for any reason. To date, that PCA is aware, there have been no successful efforts in decades whatsoever due to the vigilance of the PCA monitoring and defending our scope.
2. Currently, Act 188 and the chiropractic regulations do not address the education of US chiropractic college students in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

3. Yes, there have been long-standing, near-paranoid concerns about any efforts to “open” Pennsylvania’s Chiropractic Practice Act (Act 188 of 1986). To the best of our knowledge, those concerns, rooted in fear that “outside interests” would try to limit the scope and influence of Chiropractic, have proven to be baseless.
4. Addressing the issue of educating Chiropractic students is strategically ensuring the future of chiropractic in Pennsylvania, which is good for the students and great for currently practicing doctors looking for fresh, well-educated and trained associates.
5. PCA’s lobbyists have crafted and reaffirmed an agreement with House leadership and staff that HB 1737 (and its companion Senate bill), a “technical amendment” to Act 188, will not be “Christmas-treed” by anyone, especially including outside interests; in other words, HB 1737 is not going to be open for outside alterations or amendments.
6. If ANY potential “hostile interests” attempt to modify HB 1737, it is understood that the bill will be immediately pulled, upon request from the PCA, from any further consideration.
7. There is currently a unique opportunity for the PCA with a partnership thru the University of Pittsburgh to bring back a Chiropractic Education program to the Commonwealth, missing since Penn Straight closed in the 1990’s, which left no such education opportunity for state residents. Likewise, few, if any opportunities exist for chiropractic research with PA Chiropractors.
8. There have been comments made by some DCs with an apparent “personal agenda” that PCA’s efforts to address this issue should be rejected because of objections about one individual who has been spearheading the creation of a department of chiropractic within the University of Pittsburgh. PCA has concluded that this deliberate and personal animus from some DCs is unprofessional, mean-spirited and would willingly sacrifice credit-worthy educational experiences for chiropractic college students in order to execute on a vendetta.
9. In summary, this is an important initiative and it is clearly understood that the risk in passing HB 1737 to amend Act 188 is relatively minimal and provisions have been made in case any efforts are made by such “interests.” All upside, virtually no perceived risks.
10. A last and very relevant point: PCA leadership thoughtfully and intensively discussed/ debated/ planned this issue for quite a long period of time before unanimously voting to support the legislation, including a unanimous and reaffirming Board of Directors vote as recently as last Wednesday evening, September 13.

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