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We are writing on behalf of FORCE—a national nonprofit organization that advocates for families facing hereditary cancers—and our South Carolina constituents. The vast majority of our members carry inherited genetic mutations that significantly increase their risk of cancer. Access to trustworthy health care professionals with expertise in genetics is crucial in helping members of our community make informed medical decisions. As such, we strongly support the SC Genetic Counselor Licensure Committee's efforts to secure licensure for genetic counselors in South Carolina.

Genetics is a complex, rapidly growing field that affects virtually every area of medicine. Quality genetic counseling services are critical as more consumers base health care decisions such as increased cancer screening or risk-reducing surgeries on genetic test results. Unfortunately, the vast majority of health care providers have little or no training in genetics.

Genetic counselors, however, have advanced degrees in medical genetics and counseling. They uniquely trained to provide consumers with information, education, counseling, advocacy, and emotional support for medical conditions that have genetic indications. National guidelines recommend that patients have genetic counseling before and after genetic testing.

A recent study published in the *Journal of Oncology Practice* affirms that counseling with a genetics expert is very important for the successful implementation of genetic testing:

"...of those who had a pre-test discussion, those with a certified counselor were more likely to recall important information about having a pedigree drawn, laws protecting against discrimination by health insurers, and issues related to life and disability insurance. Additionally, those with a certified genetics counselor were more likely to get the appropriate, guideline-recommended testing."

We believe that licensure for genetic counselors is essential to ensure that genetic counseling providers are appropriately trained and credentialed. This will benefit patients by facilitating access to the most current, evidence-based information and care.

Currently, South Carolina does not legally specify who may use the title of genetic counselor. Licensure for genetic counselors is an important mechanism to help consumers and health care providers identify appropriately trained and qualified genetic counseling professionals.

Please consider championing/supporting legislation for genetic counselor licensure in South Carolina.

Sincerely,

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