



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF
PLASTIC SURGEONS



THE PLASTIC SURGERY
FOUNDATION

Executive Office

444 East Algonquin Road • Arlington Heights, IL 60005-4664

847-228-9900 • Fax: 847-228-9131 • www.plasticsurgery.org

TO: New York Senate
Committee on Higher Education

FROM: American Society of Plastic Surgeons

DATE: 5/27/13

RE: **MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT for S. 5493**

The American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) is writing to register its formal support for S. 5493, which would implement important criteria for the health care provider advertising. The ASPS was founded in 1931, and represents over 6,700 physicians nationally who are certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery or the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.

This legislation would help to provide clarity and transparency for patients when they seek health care services from any type of health care professional. It would require all health care practitioners to disclose their license type, and additionally places requirements on physicians' use of the term "board certified" in advertising efforts.

These commonsense measures are aimed to help to alleviate the "white coat" confusion that may exist in the health care setting today. Currently, we know that patients often mistake medical doctors with non-physician providers, and that they may not know that certain medical specialists are physicians. A recent American Medical Association telephone survey of 852 adults nationwide yielded that 67 per cent of respondents believed that podiatrists are medical doctors – they are not. The same survey revealed that only 32 per cent of respondents believed that otolaryngologists are physicians – they are.¹

Along those same lines, we support the provision in S. 5493 which establishes clear parameters for physicians using the term "board certified" in advertising activity. We know this term is one which the public considers to have significant meaning and importance, but which may be widely and inconsistently used. Simply stating one is "board certified" alone is not specific enough for a patient to understand the type of training his or her physician has. If a board certified plastic surgeon decided to open a LASIK clinic in downtown Albany today, s/he could advertise as being a "Board Certified" surgeon without ever making the qualification that the certificate is not, in fact, in ophthalmology. Requiring physicians to disclose the full name of the board from which they receive their certificate simply provides additional transparency, enabling prospective patients to discern the credentials and training of the physicians from whom they will receive care.

Patients deserve to know precisely what type of health care professional is treating them – whether it is a physician, nurse, assistant or technician. Uninformed choices could unfortunately lead to unintended consequences that could be avoided. That is what makes passage of this legislation so important.

Thank you for your consideration. **We urge you to support passage of S. 5493.**

¹ Global Strategy Group survey on behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) Scope of Practice Partnership, conducted August 13-18, 2008. The survey was conducted among 852 adults nationwide. The overall margin of error is +/- 3.4 per cent at the 95 per cent confidence level. (AMA Advocacy Resource Center)