

Dear The Honorable Rep _____

I am writing today about HB 583. As an acupuncture student preparing for my licensure and a future small business owner in Florida, I am deeply concerned that this bill restricts using the words “physician” and “doctor” in healthcare titles, business names, advertising.

Florida’s Acupuncture Practice Act (F.S. 457) dates back to the 1980’s. It was last updated in 1998. The definitions, protections and prohibitions provided under the Act have remained unchanged largely because, it was well conceived and continues to protect the public’s interests. **Over the last 40 years, Florida has licensed roughly 4,500 Acupuncturists who use or have used the professional titles Acupuncture Physician (AP) and/or Doctor of Oriental Medicine (DOM).** This has been an accepted practice dating back to the establishment of this State’s Acupuncture profession.

Including Licensed Acupuncturists in HB 583 has no effect on strengthening public protections.

Fraudulent activities and deceptive advertising practices are already illegal in Florida and prosecuted or disciplined under existing statutes. **HB 583 will only accomplish creating greater obstacles and expenses for some small independent business owners,** who also happen to be health care practitioners.

I am asking that you support an AMENDMENT to HB 583 that includes use of Licensed Acupuncturists professional titles and initials. Below, I have provided several examples of how Acupuncturists serve an important role in the health care delivery and management for millions of Floridians and why it is vital to preserve their professional titles "Acupuncture Physician" and “Doctor of Oriental Medicine”:

- 1. Florida statutes require Acupuncturists students to complete prerequisites as well as a 4-year course of study in acupuncture and oriental medicine,** in addition to completing academic courses in western anatomy, western physiology, western pathology, western biomedical terminology, first aid, and CPR. **Prior to licensing Florida requires applicants to pass four (4) separate National Board Exams** that cover comprehensive aspects of both traditional eastern medicine and modern western medical diseases and pathologies to recognize red flags and refer patients as needed.
- 2. College tuitions for acupuncture medical training are largely funded by federal grants and approved federal student loan programs.** With downward pressure on the profession in Florida imposed by the restrictions in HB 583, private colleges that prepare acupuncturists will face decreases in enrollment resulting in out-of-state placement of those medical students. **This could lead to a collapse of the private colleges that have been preparing Florida Acupuncturists for nearly 40 years.**
- 3. If HB 583 is passed without including Acupuncturists, then Florida’s actively licensed 2,650 Acupuncturists will experience uncertainty and financial burdens** that no small business owners should have to endure without cause or some proof of harm to the public. Florida has always supported free enterprise and small businesses. HB 583 is an affront to those principles and seeks only to consolidate use of terms and titles without a mandate, or any clear public service objective.

4. **Acupuncturists have never needed to be disciplined by any Florida agency for misusing titles or misleading patients about our licensing or credentials.** We take great care to ensure we know our professional boundaries! We work tirelessly to educate and engage with medical doctors, nurses, other specialties, and patients to ensure they understand the benefits and limitations of Acupuncture practice in Florida.

Please urgently consider introducing or supporting an AMENDMENT to HB583 that provides inclusion for Licensed Acupuncturists under this law. Please support Acupuncturists' ability to continue using their professional titles the same way they have been used in Florida dating back into the 1980's. The proposed abrupt changes HB 583 will impose uncertainty and financial burdens not just on the acupuncturists, but also on the residents of Florida who seek and rely on acupuncture services to maintain and restore their health.

I am happy to answer any questions you might have on this topic. Please support your constituents access to affordable acupuncture care in your district and community. Avoiding excessive regulations on small businesses is good business in Florida. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Student Name
School Name
Class of ##### (year)