

**PRESENTATION OF THE
BOARD OF ACUPUNCTURE**

TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE,
CONSUMER PROTECTION AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

TWENTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE
Regular Session of 2008

Thursday, February 21, 2008
9:00 a.m.

**TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL NO. 3028, RELATING TO GRADUATES OF
FOREIGN ACUPUNCTURE PROGRAMS.**

TO THE HONORABLE RUSSELL S. KOKUBUN, CHAIR,
AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

My name is Dr. Gary Saito, Chiropractor, and I am a public member of the Board of Acupuncture ("Board"). The Board has authorized me to speak on its behalf. The Board appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill No. 3028, which is an Administration bill.

The Committee on Health heard this bill on February 4, 2008 and it was passed out of Committee unamended.

This bill proposes to require foreign-educated acupuncture applicants to have their educational information evaluated by a Board-approved professional credentialing evaluator as a prerequisite for examination and licensure.

Section 436E-5, H.R.S. mandates the Board to ensure that applicants for acupuncture examination and licensure meet the same high standards of acupuncture education, regardless of whether they attended an acupuncture program located in the United States or one in a foreign country. Applicants who attended U.S. acupuncture programs are required to complete an accredited program or one that is recognized as

a candidate for accreditation by a national accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. On the other hand, for applicants who completed a foreign education program, the Board is required to review and approve the foreign school curricula and ensure that the institution was recognized by the appropriate foreign government.

Because U.S. acupuncture education programs are overseen by the national accrediting body, the Board is able to rely upon the uniform standard set forth via accreditation and therefore, has not had difficulty ensuring that graduates of U.S. programs meet the educational requirements. This, however, has not been the case for foreign-educated applicants. The reason is because there is no agency or organization that oversees the quality of foreign acupuncture education.

As a result, the Board, in order to meet its mandate as applies to foreign-educated applicants, must undertake duties similar to that of an accrediting body, for which it does not have the experience, qualifications, or resources. In doing so, the Board has encountered significant roadblocks, such as being unable to ascertain whether the foreign documents are, in fact, authentic. In addition, the Board's review of school records, such as transcripts, completion certificates and the like has been hampered due to a lack of standardization among the foreign education systems.

A credential evaluation would include an assessment of the applicant's academic record, courses studied, and the degree, certificate or diploma earned in terms of equivalency to U.S. acupuncture education. The report would also state whether the institution is recognized by the foreign government where the school is located. Further,

the service would verify whether the credentials are authentic. The Board believes that having the above information would enable it to better understand the foreign academic credentials and provide it the opportunity to conduct a well-informed and objective review of the applicant's educational qualifications.

Credential evaluators, who are experienced and trained in both U.S. and international education systems are recognized authorities in their fields. In addition, they have access to foreign educational programs. Equally as important, they have experience dealing with overseas officials. The Board does not possess these valuable experiences or resources.

It is important to note that in utilizing credential evaluations, the Board would not relinquish its responsibility to ensure that foreign-educated license applicants meet the education requirements.

And although foreign graduates will be required to pay respective application fees to the credential evaluator, the impact on the applicant will be positive because the Board will be able to expedite the processing of their applications.

Therefore, the Board believes that amending section 436E-5(d), H.R.S., to authorize the Board to require graduates of foreign acupuncture programs to submit their educational information to a credential evaluator, will assist the Board in ensuring that all applicants for acupuncture examination and licensure, regardless of whether they attained their education in the U.S. or at a foreign program, meet the high standards of acupuncture education that the legislature intended.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.