

April 8, 2013

Erin O. Isom Wills  
817 Erskine Street  
Hampton, VA 23666

Congressman Bobby Scott  
2600 Washington Avenue  
Suite 1010  
Newport News, VA 23607

Dear Congressman Scott,

I am a current dietetic student nearing the completion of my core subjects, come the end of this year. After that, I will apply to be matched to an eleven month dietetic internship and shortly after, I will sit for the national dietetic exam. As an upcoming registered dietitian, I look forward to entering this field during a time when advancements within this career are transpiring and highly anticipated change is taking place. I must say, it was to my dismay to learn that at this time, a registered dietitian cannot independently write a diet order nor order a lab test for a patient without the supervision or approval of a physician. I understand a physician carries different credentials than that of a registered dietitian, however, in order to obtain 'RD' at the end of one's name, the individual must have accomplished the following:

- earn a bachelor's degree
- complete an accredited didactic program in dietetics
- complete a supervised dietetic internship or professional experience
- take an exam administered by the Commission on Dietetic Registration of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
- participate in continuing education

It is my thought that after completing such a lengthy and intensive program, that the registered dietitian would be fully capable of making an educated decision regarding a patient's diet order and knowing what labs need ordering in order to provide full nutritional support. To not have that functionality available insinuates that the knowledge, practice, and skills developed throughout the education process of becoming a registered dietitian is taken for granted, and therefore, not taken seriously. It is for this reason that I write you in support of the new Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) rule on therapeutic diet orders.

This rule would allow registered dietitians the opportunity to apply their knowledge learned, by confidently writing therapeutic diet orders for each applicable patient, order the appropriate test to monitor the effectiveness of dietary plans and orders and make modifications based upon the lab tests. As a registered dietitian, one is considered the food and nutrition expert. By definition, the term expert

means “having, involving, or displaying special skill or knowledge derived from training or experience”, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary. This should speak volumes about the abilities of a registered dietitian and it is my hope that you can understand the opportunities this rule would afford all qualified dietitians.

I look forward to earning the title registered dietitian, as it is a credential I will proudly own because I know it is one that is earning the respect that it deserves through incentives put forth by the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services, as well as the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and others. It is my intent that my letter provides you with the notion to appreciate what a dietitian can do and push for us as we continue to advance in this competitive healthcare market.

Sincerely,

*Erin O. Isom Wills*

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