

New Hampshire

MEDICAL SOCIETY

ADVOCATING FOR PHYSICIANS & PUBLIC HEALTH SINCE 1791

February 5, 2025

Honorable Chairman, MacDonald
House Health, Human Services, and Elderly Affairs Committee
Legislative Office Building
33 North State Street
Concord, NH 03301

Testimony in opposition of HB 392 relative directing the dissolution of HHS Office of Health Equity. My name is Cathy Stratton. I am the CEO of the New Hampshire Medical Society and I am speaking on behalf of the Medical Society and nearly 2000 members in opposition to HB 392, directing the dissolution of HHS Office of Health Equity. The New Hampshire Medical Society is a nonprofit association of physicians and other healthcare clinicians. The organization's mission is to advocate for the well-being of our patients, for our profession, and for the betterment of public health in New Hampshire. The Society envisions a state in which personal and public health are high priorities and all people who live and work here have access to quality healthcare.

What does 'health equity' mean to my physician members? Health equity means addressing the barriers that negatively impact patient care. For example - are patients able to access appointments? Do they have transportation? Do they need hearing or vision accommodation? Can they follow up with medications, physical and behavioral health therapy, and prescriptions?

You will hear from many physicians and Medical Society members today about their experiences and the impact the Office of Health Equity has on patient care, health outcomes and the challenges that patients who depend on these services would face if this bill were to pass. The testimonies today highlight the many ways that the Office of Health Equity improves patient care and health outcomes by addressing the unique barriers to health care for each patient population.

If passed, this bill would create challenges for several underserved communities including veteran, elderly, physically and mentally challenged, hearing and visually impaired populations, and many others for whom barriers to accessing care is a challenge. Additionally, I want to express strong concern about the provision that would prevent re-establishment of these entities. Legislating for a future that we do not know or understand is a dangerous course of action.

The Medical Society is here to advocate for the rights of patients. Equity programs that identify and serve New Hampshire's veterans, elderly, disabled, and underserved populations - core public health programs that ensure quality healthcare for all and a core value of the Society and its members.

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Elimination of the Office of Health Equity would impact each physician, physician practice, and patient differently. I can say, however, that NH physicians unilaterally believe that the Office of Health Equity serves an important and valuable role in the health of New Hampshire's citizens and the patients we all care for.

For these reasons, the New Hampshire Medical Society strongly opposes HB 392, and we urge the House Health, Human Services, and Elderly Affairs Committee to recommend Ought Not to Pass.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



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