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TO: Senator Moen, Chairman
Members, Senate Committee on Health, Utilities, Veterans & Military
Affairs

FROM: Christina C. Lemon, R.D., M.S., C.D.; Wisconsin Dietetic Association

RE: Testimony in Support of AB 91

DATE: October 20, 1999

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you for scheduling AB 91 for a hearing this morning.

The Wisconsin Dietetic Association strongly supports AB 91. Including dietitians among the health care professionals covered by Wisconsin's volunteer health care provider program will yield the following advantages:

- Dietitians who wish to volunteer their services at qualifying free clinics will no longer face the problem of obtaining liability coverage for their services as volunteers.
- District and area dietetic associations will be more successful in their efforts to recruit volunteer dietitians to meet increasing needs for nutrition therapy in these clinics.
- Nutrition counseling by qualified professionals will be more available to persons obtaining services of a free clinic. This is of particular concern given that this population is at higher risk of poor nutritional status.
- Medical nutrition therapy (MNT) is a cost-effective way of treating and controlling many diseases and medical conditions including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer and kidney disease. When applied by qualified professionals, MNT saves money by reducing health care expenditures including costly medication and high technology treatment.

The Wisconsin Dietetic Association appreciates the Committee's attention to this matter, and again, strongly supports AB 91 and urges its passage.

Joe Plouff



Testimony in Support of AB 91
Senate Committee on Health, Utilities and Military Affairs
October 20, 1999

State Representative - 29th Assembly District

Thank you Chairman Moen and members of the Committee for holding a public hearing today on AB 91, relating to the participation of dietitians in the state's Volunteer Health Care Provider program.

Barbara Knous, a dietitian and an Associate Professor in the Department of Food and Nutrition at UW-Stout brought the need for this legislation to my attention. Currently, dietitians are **not** included on the list of health care professionals who may participate in this volunteer health care program.

Under the Volunteer Health Care Provider program, specified health care professionals may donate their time and services free of charge at a non-profit agency. Among the health professionals currently permitted to participate in this program are physicians, dentists, nurses, optometrists and physician assistants. Some of the benefits to patients include diagnostic tests, health education, office visits, prescriptions, and referrals to specialists. These services enhance the availability of health care services to low-income uninsured clients. Under AB 91, dietitians would be allowed to provide services under the volunteer health care provider program.

The addition of dietitians to this program would provide an important component of health care to those patients. As I have learned, an ever-increasing number of people who receive care through the volunteer health care provider program require the services of a dietitian. In addition, dietitians are often needed for consultation because of health needs such as severe diabetes and other conditions in which dietary services are necessary.

However, without the liability protections provided by the Volunteer Health Care Provider program, non-covered health care providers are hesitant to volunteer their services. This bill would address that concern.

The Assembly Health Committee approved this bill on an 18 to 0 vote. AB 91 was then approved unanimously by the Assembly on a voice vote earlier this month.

AB 91 has bi-partisan support and is endorsed by the Wisconsin Dietetic Association and the Wisconsin Nurses Association.

I thank the committee for considering AB 91 and ask that you act favorably on this proposal. I will try to answer any questions that committee members may have at this time.