



**MEDICAL SOCIETY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK**

865 Merrick Avenue, Westbury, NY 11590-9007  
(516) 488-6100, FAX: (516) 281-3096

December 21, 2017

Lois Margaret Nora, MD, JD, MBA  
President & CEO  
American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS)  
353 North Clark Street, Suite 1400  
Chicago, IL 60654

Dear Dr. Nora:

*I would like to thank you on behalf of the Medical Society of the State of New York (MSSNY) for meeting with the state and specialty medical societies in Chicago December 4, 2017. I appreciated the openness and transparency in your discussion of the activities of the ABMS, and was interested to hear the opinions of a diverse group of physicians regarding maintaining professional competency and standards of practice throughout a physician's professional lifespan.*

*I was unable to make comments during the limited question and answer period but wanted to relate the concerns of our members within the State of New York.*

*The members of the MSSNY are committed to lifelong learning and maintenance of competency throughout a physician's career. Unfortunately, in some specialties, MOC has added to the physician's burden of duties and in some cases led to a reduction in the joy of the practice of medicine for many, adding unnecessary life stress that could be detrimental to physician performance and patient care. I view the MOC issue as one of many modifiable stressors in the current practice environment. My hope is that we can work together to maintain high standards of practice and patient care while minimizing the adverse consequences to physicians and their patients.*

*My understanding from the various presentations at the MOC meeting is that there is much good work being done to address the concerns of our membership. I would like to highlight some of the concerns for our membership for you, and request that you share this with the ABMS leadership and that of the various specialty boards:*

**#1 Cost.** *There was much information on the direct and indirect cost of MOC. There also appears to be significant variation in the costs per specialty. MSSNY would like to see ongoing efforts at reducing the direct costs in terms of fees charged to diplomates, but equally importantly the indirect costs of testing centers, travel, and time away from our patients and families.*



**#2 Non-punitive pathways for remediation.** My understanding from the information discussed at the 12/4/17 meeting is that the failure rate for recertification is low. Despite the assertion of some boards that a lack or lapse of certification should not result in loss of privileges, loss of certification can still have a devastating effect upon a physician and their patients. MSSNY would appreciate more information on how the various boards within the ABMS address the problem, and any current best practices to allow remediation with a minimum of disruption to the physician and their practice.

**#3 Education to external stakeholders with regards to non-maintenance of certification.** Our MSSNY delegation heard from multiple ABMS board representatives that certification, or lack thereof, should not be a sole criteria for privileges with hospitals or participation with insurers. MSSNY would appreciate more information on how this has been communicated to payers and institutions for the edification of our members. We would be happy to assist in transmitting the message throughout New York State. Like many state medical associations we have sought legislation to assure that that board certification not be a pre-condition of privileges or network participation, but certainly your assistance could make such legislation unnecessary.

**#4 Alternatives to the high stakes examination.** MSSNY agrees with a number of the speakers that there needs to be further refinement in the process to reduce physician stress and enhance learning. MSSNY believes that creating a lower stress, ongoing pathway throughout the decade is an improvement in the process for most physicians. Based on your research we do not object to continuing a test every 10 years for the 20% of physicians who prefer it. MSSNY believes that with the technology available today that the cost and inconvenience of testing should be addressed quickly. Physicians should be able to complete a secure examination at a time and place of their choosing.

**#5 Enhance the life-work balance of physicians.** MOC concerns are a part of the much larger issue of physician satisfaction and practice sustainability. Please receive the above suggestions in a spirit of mutual dedication to the improvement in our performance as physicians and the betterment of the care of our patients. Physicians' time with their patients and with their lives outside of practice are limited. We need to work together to minimize any burdens to our physicians. Happy and healthy physicians hopefully have happier and healthier patients!

Thank you again for your presentation and that of your colleagues. MSSNY looks forward to further discussion with you and your member boards to further improve the lives of our physicians and the patients they care for.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Madejski, M.D. FACP  
President Elect, MSSNY

cc: Charles Rothberg, MD, President, MSSNY  
Philip Schuh, CPA, MS, Executive Vice President, MSSNY  
MSSNY Councilors  
MSSNY Board of Trustees