



American Board of Medical Specialties

Higher standards. Better care.®

American Board of Medical Specialties

222 North LaSalle Street, Suite 1500

Chicago, IL 60601

T: (312) 436-2600

F: (312) 436-2700

www.abms.org

October 25, 2012

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, MD
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. Office
1535 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Pete Stark
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. Office
239 Cannon Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Cassidy and Stark:

The 24 Member Boards of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) are responding individually to the U.S. Congressional Dyslexia Caucus' request for information about the Boards' test accommodation policies and processes and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). I write on behalf of ABMS to express our commitment to assuring that physicians seeking specialty Board Certification have equal access to certifying exams, and their achievement on these tests reflect the test takers' aptitude rather than any disability.

Established in 1933 as a not-for-profit organization, ABMS' mission is to maintain and improve the quality of medical care in the United States by assisting the organization's 24 Member Boards in their efforts to develop and use professional and educational standards for evaluating and certifying physician specialists. Approximately 800,000 licensed physicians practicing in the U.S. are certified by an ABMS Member Board.

The purpose of certification is to assure the public that a physician holding himself/herself out as a specialist in a particular field of medicine has obtained the requisite education and training, and demonstrated mastery of the knowledge, judgment, professionalism, and clinical and communication skills necessary to provide quality patient care in that specialty.

Unlike medical licensure, specialty certification by an ABMS Member Board is a voluntary process. Experts in each field of medicine determine the qualifications for certification in that specialty, including the amount and type of training needed to qualify for certification as well as the types of examinations that will best evaluate whether a physician possesses the knowledge and skills needed to provide quality care in a particular specialty. Certifying boards are given appropriate deference to determine the clinical competence of the physician specialists they certify as long as the reasons for the decision are not arbitrary, capricious, or discriminatory.

Member Boards of the American Board of Medical Specialties

American Board of Allergy and Immunology | American Board of Anesthesiology | American Board of Colon and Rectal Surgery | American Board of Dermatology
American Board of Emergency Medicine | American Board of Family Medicine | American Board of Internal Medicine | American Board of Medical Genetics
American Board of Neurological Surgery | American Board of Nuclear Medicine | American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology | American Board of Ophthalmology
American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery | American Board of Otolaryngology | American Board of Pathology | American Board of Pediatrics
American Board of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation | American Board of Plastic Surgery | American Board of Preventive Medicine | American Board of Psychiatry
and Neurology | American Board of Radiology | American Board of Surgery | American Board of Thoracic Surgery | American Board of Urology

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Lois Margaret Nora, MD, JD, MBA
President and CEO



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ABMS and its Member Boards have a strong interest in complying with both the letter and the spirit of the ADA through the fair administration of certification examinations. Over the next several months, we intend to develop best practices guidelines for our 24 Member Boards to assure that their test accommodations policies and procedures comply with the ADA, including those provisions most recently included in the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 and in newly implemented EEOC regulations. We look forward to working with you in this regard and would appreciate any feedback you might have on the structure of a best practice guideline.

Public interest is served by ensuring the integrity and fair application of licensing and certification examination requirements, for both disabled and non-disabled individuals. Likewise, members of the public rely on Board Certification by an ABMS Member Board as a means of assuring that all physicians certified in a particular medical specialty have successfully completed the same rigorous examinations. ABMS is fully committed to assisting our Member Boards in adopting test administration policies and practices that balance these two equally important public imperatives.

If you have any questions or comments about the process of medical specialty Board Certification, please contact me at 312-436-2600. We want to be a resource as you further consider this issue and would be available to meet with you as needed.

Sincerely,

Lois Margaret Nora, MD, JD, MBA
President and Chief Executive Officer
American Board of Medical Specialties

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