

HOUSE No. 5147

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, December 23, 2024.

The committee on House Ways and Means to whom was referred the Bill relative to genetic counselors (House, No. 274), reports recommending that the same ought to pass with an amendment substituting therefor the accompanying bill (House, No. 5147).

For the committee,

AARON MICHLEWITZ.

HOUSE No. 5147

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court
(2023-2024)**

An Act relative to genetic counselors.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 112 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition,
2 is hereby amended by striking out section 252 and inserting in place thereof the following
3 section:-

4 Section 252. As used in sections 252 to 258, inclusive, the following words shall, unless
5 the context requires otherwise, have the following meanings:

6 “ABGC”, the American Board of Genetic Counseling, a national agency for certification
7 and recertification of genetic counselors, or its successor agency.

8 “ABMGG”, the American Board of Medical Genetics and Genomics, a national agency
9 for certification and recertification of genetic counselors, MD geneticists and PhD geneticists, or
10 its successor agency.

11 “ACGC”, the Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling, a national agency for
12 accreditation of genetic counselor training programs, or its successor agency.

13 “Active candidate status”, a person who has met the requirements established by ABGC
14 to take the ABGC genetic counselor certification exam and has been granted the designation by
15 ABGC.

16 “Board”, the board of registration of genetic counselors.

17 “General supervision”, a supervisor, whether a licensed genetic counselor or MD, who
18 has the overall responsibility to assess the work of a provisional licensed genetic counselor,
19 including regular meetings and chart review; provided, however, that an annual supervision
20 contract signed by the supervisor and supervisee shall be on file with both parties.

21 “Licensed genetic counselor”, a person licensed under section 105 of chapter 13 to
22 engage in the practice of genetic counseling.

23 “Practice of genetic counseling”, a communication process, conducted by 1 or more
24 appropriately trained individuals, that may include:

25 (a) obtaining and evaluating individual, family and medical histories to determine genetic
26 risk for genetic-medical conditions and diseases in a patient, their offspring and other family
27 members;

28 (b) discussing the features, natural history, means of diagnosis, genetic and
29 environmental factors and management of risk for genetic-medical conditions and diseases;

30 (c) identifying, ordering and coordinating genetic laboratory tests and other diagnostic
31 studies as appropriate for the genetic assessment;

32 (d) integrating genetic laboratory test results and other diagnostic studies with personal
33 and family medical history to assess and communicate risk factors for genetic-medical conditions
34 and diseases;

35 (e) explaining the clinical implications of genetic laboratory tests and other diagnostic
36 studies and their results;

37 (f) evaluating the patient's or family's responses to the condition or risk of recurrence and
38 provide patient-centered counseling and anticipatory guidance;

39 (g) identifying and utilizing community resources that provide medical, educational,
40 financial and psychosocial support and advocacy;

41 (h) providing written documentation of medical, genetic and counseling information for
42 families and health care professionals; or

43 (i) any other criteria the board deems appropriate and consistent with clauses (a) to (h),
44 inclusive.

45 "Provisional licensed genetic counselor", a person with a provisional license issued under
46 section 255.

47 SECTION 2. Said chapter 112, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out
48 sections 254 through 257, inclusive, and inserting in place thereof the following 4 sections:-

49 Section 254. An applicant for registration as a genetic counselor shall:

50 (a) possess at a minimum: (i) a master's degree from a genetic counseling training
51 program that is accredited by the ACGC or an equivalent as determined by the ACGC; or (ii) a

52 doctoral degree from a medical genetics training program that is accredited by the ABMGG or
53 an equivalent as determined by the ABMGG;

54 (b) have obtained: (i) ABGC certification by examination as a genetic counselor; or (ii)
55 the ABMGG certification by examination as a Ph.D. medical geneticist; and

56 (c) have met experience requirements as may be required by the board; provided, that the
57 board shall require continuing education as a condition for license renewals.

58 Section 255. A person who meets the qualifications for licensure as a genetic counselor,
59 except certification and who has been granted active candidate status, may apply to practice as a
60 provisional licensed genetic counselor by filing an approved application with the board and
61 payment of a fee to be determined by the secretary of administration and finance. The board may
62 grant a provisional license to a person who successfully completes a genetic counseling
63 education program approved by the board and is qualified to be admitted to the examination.
64 Such license shall be valid for 2 years from the date of its issue and may be renewed for an
65 additional 1 year; provided, that the applicant shall have active candidate status according to
66 ACGC or if the applicant fails the first sitting of the ABMGG exam, as applicable. Such
67 provisional license shall expire automatically upon the earliest of the following:

68 (i) issuance of a full license; or

69 (ii) the date printed on the temporary license.

70 An application for extension shall be signed by a supervising licensed genetic counselor.

71 A provisional licensed genetic counselor shall be under the general supervision of a licensed
72 genetic counselor or a licensed physician with current ABMGG certification in clinical genetics

73 at all times during which the provisional licensed genetic counselor performs clinical genetic
74 counseling. The board shall adopt rules governing such supervision and direction which may not
75 require the immediate physical presence of the supervising licensed genetic counselor.

76 Section 256. (a) The board shall examine applicants for certification as genetic
77 counselors at such times and places as it may determine. The examination shall meet the
78 standards established by the ACGC. The examination shall test an applicant's knowledge of
79 basic and clinical sciences as they relate to genetic counseling theory and practice and other
80 subjects as the board may deem useful to determine the applicant's fitness to act as a genetic
81 counselor. The board may utilize a national examination that meets the requirements of this
82 section.

83 (b) The board shall examine applicants for certification as Ph.D. medical geneticists at
84 such times and places as it may determine. The examination shall meet the standards established
85 by the ABMGG. The examination shall test an applicant's knowledge of basic and clinical
86 sciences as they relate to genetic counseling theory and practice and other subjects as the board
87 may deem useful to determine the applicant's fitness to act as a genetic counselor. The board
88 may utilize a national examination that meets the requirements of this section.

89 Section 257. No person shall hold themselves out as a genetic counselor unless they are
90 licensed in accordance with sections 255 or 256, or under section 105 of chapter 13. No person
91 who is not so licensed may use in connection with their name or place of business the title
92 "genetic counselor", "licensed genetic counselor", "gene counselor", "genetic consultant",
93 "genetic associate" or any words, letters, abbreviations or insignia indicating or implying a
94 person holds a genetic counseling license.

95 Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent or restrict the practice, service or
96 activities of:

97 (a) any person licensed, certified or registered in the commonwealth, by any other statute
98 other than as a genetic counselor from engaging in activities within the scope of practice of the
99 profession or occupation for which the person is licensed; provided, that the person shall not
100 represent to the public, directly or indirectly, that the person is licensed under sections 255 or
101 256, or under section 105 of chapter 13, and that the person shall not use any name, title or
102 designation indicating that the person is licensed under those sections;

103 (b) any person employed as a genetic counselor by the federal government or an agency
104 thereof if such person provides genetic counseling services solely under the direction and control
105 of the organization by which the person is employed;

106 (c) a student or intern enrolled in an approved genetic counseling education program if
107 genetic counseling services performed by the student are an integral part of the student's course
108 of study and are performed under the direct supervision of a licensed genetic counselor assigned
109 to supervise the student and who is on duty and available in the assigned patient care area and if
110 the person is designated by a title which clearly indicates the person's status as a student or
111 intern;

112 (d) an individual trained as a Ph.D. medical geneticist who is reapplying for the ABMGG
113 certification examination and is gathering logbook cases under a supervisor identified in the
114 training program's ABMGG accreditation documents as a member of the training faculty; and

115 (e) visiting ABGC or ABMGG-certified genetic counselors from outside the
116 commonwealth operating as consultants or the use of occasional services of organizations from
117 outside the commonwealth employing ABGC or ABMGG-certified genetic counselors.