

THE DAILY SENTINEL

Email Letters: Sept. 29, 2020

DORA's change to Colorado's Peer Assistance Program puts patient safety at risk

Patient safety is at risk.

I have devoted nearly two decades of my life to assuring that patient safety is the most important element of medicine. I am appalled that taking place Nov. 1, our state will take away critical confidentiality protections for doctors seeking peer-to-peer assistance.

I championed the passing of the Michael Skolnik Medical Transparency Act, which requires transparency of health-care workers so consumers in Colorado have access to information about their physicians to make more informed health-care decisions. However, medical licensees deserve to keep their health conditions confidential, as long as they are under the care of a peer health assistance program. The goal of my organization, Citizens for Patient Safety, and my life's mission is to reduce medical harm – and harm to thousands of patients will occur with this change.

A pivotal way to protect patient safety is by having healthy physicians. During COVID-19, our front-line workers need our support. Numerous research studies have demonstrated that medical licensees will not seek assistance if it is not done in a confidential manner. Now, with the removal of critical confidentiality protections, our State is communicating that medical licensees' lives are not worth a second look.

I am just one voice of a united coalition of doctors, providers, and organizations that are urging Gov. Polis to step in and show that patient safety and the lives of medical licensees is important <https://patientsafetycolorado.com>. The need is urgent, and the time is now to ensure patient safety.

PATTY SKOLNIK