



SENATOR CHARLES SCHWERTNER, MD
SENATE DISTRICT 5

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Schwertner Defends Access to Psychiatric Care; Calls on Paxton to Affirm Definition of "Physician"

Schwertner calls decision by Judge Rory Olsen not to accept psychiatric evaluations offered by doctors of osteopathy a clear violation of Texas law, says it will only serve to limit psychiatric care in Harris County.

AUSTIN, TX -- Today, Senator Charles Schwertner, MD (R-Georgetown) sent a formal request to Attorney General Ken Paxton (attached) asking that he issue a legal opinion affirming the right of doctors of osteopathy (DO) to practice medicine in the state of Texas.

Last week, probate Judge Rory Olsen of Harris County created a measure of controversy by stating he would no longer accept recommendations for involuntary psychiatric commitment from doctors of osteopathic medicine -- an altogether puzzling decision that seems to defy decades of established legal and medical precedent.

"The simple fact is, Judge Olsen doesn't have the authority to decide which physicians he does or does not want to listen to," said Schwertner. "Regardless of this man's opinion, the law governing the practice of medicine is exceedingly clear: DOs -- just like MDs -- are fully-trained, licensed, and accredited physicians with all the rights and responsibilities that entails. Period."

Generally regarded as more holistic and prevention-oriented, osteopathic doctors currently represent about 10 percent of all Texas physicians. DOs enjoy the same practice rights as MDs in all 50 states, including Texas.

"As a physician, I find Judge Olsen's attempt to singlehandedly redefine the practice of medicine both reckless and profoundly misguided," continued Schwertner. "This arbitrary policy threatens to make an already difficult situation worse by further limiting access to psychiatric care in an area of the state that already finds itself woefully underserved."

A medical doctor by training, Dr. Schwertner currently serves as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services. Schwertner is currently serving his second term as the senator for Senate District 5, a ten-county region of central and east Texas.

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