



HARVARD
MEDICAL SCHOOL



**BRIGHAM AND
WOMEN'S HOSPITAL**

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December 30, 2015

Re: Bill H2710.

Attention Chairpersons and other members of the Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight:

I respectfully write to strongly oppose Bill H2710 which recommends that a single style of the increasingly popular mind-body exercise, Tai Chi, be designated the "official Tai Chi emblem of the commonwealth of Massachusetts".

My stance on this matter is based on my academic perspective as an Assistant Professor of Medicine at the Harvard Medical School (HMS) and Research Director of the Osher Center for Integrative Medicine jointly based at HMS and Brigham and Women's Hospital, as well as my long-term experience (over 40 years) as a practitioner, teacher and internationally recognized advocate for improving public awareness and access to Tai Chi and related practices for health and well-being.

For the past 15 years, the primary focus on my academic research has been evaluating the health benefits of Tai Chi. I have served as principal or senior co-investigator on more than 20 National of Institute of Health (NIH)-funded studies. My Tai Chi research has included studies in populations with balance impairments, osteoporosis, stroke, Parkinson's disease, cognitive decline, chronic pain, heart failure, pulmonary disease, cancer, and depression, and has resulted in more than 100 peer-reviewed medical research papers, many in leading scientific journals. My leadership in the field of integrative medicine research has been recognized nationally and internationally through service on multiple NIH advisory panels; chairing of scientific review committees for international research conferences; serving on editorial boards for three journals; and invitations to give keynote and plenary talks at national and international conferences. My commitment to translating my academic research to inform policy and educate the public is reflected in the *Harvard Medical School Guide to Tai Chi*, a book that I published in 2013, which received an Award of Excellence in Medical Communication by the American Medical Writers Association.



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As an objective scientist, I can unequivocally state that there is no evidence what so ever that any one style or approach to Tai Chi is more effective or safer than any other. Moreover, like with any form of exercise or therapeutic regimen, one of the biggest challenges is simply getting individuals to engage and to sustain adherence to a given program. Toward this end, to endorse any one specific approach to Tai Chi training, in this case, 'Five Elements Tai Chi', from among the literally hundreds of approaches currently offered in Massachusetts, would represent a very narrow perspective. It would likely discourage the vast majority of people in this state to take advantage of the rich diversity of alternative approaches to Tai Chi training currently being offered in their local communities, and thus decrease access to this promising therapy.

While I am encouraged by the fact that sound medical research findings are catalyzing Tai Chi's integration into state and federal health rehabilitation and prevention programs, I do not believe the very narrow perspective of this bill will serve anything beyond the limited benefit to those proposing it.

Thank you for considering this perspective. I am happy to provide additional information if it would be informative.

Sincerely,

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