

## Maryland's Truth In Advertising Law – Protecting the Consumer or Punishing the Physician?

/PRNewswire/ – Effective October 1, 2012, a new Maryland law (S.B. 395/H.B. 957) requires physicians who advertise board certification to include their area of specialty and the certifying board. Further, the law also specifies that the only recognized certifying boards are the 24 members of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), the definitive specialty board for all U.S. physicians.

Dr. Henry Garazo, a plastic surgeon certified by the ABMS-member American Board of Plastic Surgery (ABPS), feels that the bill will greatly benefit the public by helping patients [identify doctors who are board certified](#) in the correct specialty. He notes that the law will be especially helpful to plastic surgery patients, as the field has attracted numerous doctors from other specialties who are not properly trained in cosmetic surgery.

“An educated patient is an empowered patient,” says Dr. Garazo. “After years of confusion and delay, Maryland patients will now know if a

cosmetic surgeon’ is a real plastic surgeon. Given the recent rise in popularity of plastic surgery, many non-plastic surgery trained physicians have been calling themselves cosmetic surgeons and going to weekend courses in an attempt to perform cosmetic surgery. Previously there was no requirement, with many only stating they were board certified.’ Many of my patients were shocked to learn that a cosmetic surgeon’ was in fact a family medical doctor or ER physician with no formal training in plastic surgery. They didn’t even know!”

The public is generally unaware that any licensed doctor can perform cosmetic surgery in a noncertified office-based setting and advertise themselves as a “cosmetic” surgeon without having proper training in that area of medicine. Lack of adequate training may jeopardize patient safety and result in undesirable surgical outcomes. The new Maryland law will help patients choose only qualified doctors by identifying whether a surgeon has been properly trained and certified to perform the services he or she is advertising.

Board certification is a subject that can be difficult to understand, particularly as it relates to plastic surgery. In addition to the ABMS – a nonprofit organization that develops professional standards for doctors to serve the public good – there are hundreds of self-designated boards in the U.S. that are not recognized by the ABMS, many of which relate to cosmetic plastic surgery procedures. Under the new Maryland law, doctors will not be available to advertise that they are “board certified” by one of these unapproved, self-designated boards.

Studies have shown that 90% of the public wants a board certified plastic surgeon to perform their cosmetic or reconstructive procedures, but the lack of regulations and questionable marketing practices have made it difficult for the consumer to determine a doctor’s true area of specialty. ABPS board certification is voluntary and involves a rigorous process of examination and peer review, with specific requirements on education and training. To be certified in plastic surgery by the ABPS, a candidate complete these requirements:

- Be a graduate of an accredited medical school
- Have completed a prerequisite surgical residency program (usually three to five years)
- Have completed training in an approved plastic surgery program (usually two to three years)
- Have been recommended for ABPS eligibility by the chairperson of their training program
- Have passed a rigorous written and an oral exam
- Have submitted a list of all operations performed
- Have met ABPS ethical and moral standards

With the passage of the new law, consumers in Maryland can feel confident they are selecting a qualified plastic surgeon specifically trained in that demanding discipline.

Read the full text of the Maryland truth in advertising law [here](#):

<http://plasticsurgeryservices.net/Maryland-house-bill-957-truth-in-advertising-law.pdf>

About Dr. Henry F. Garazo: Plastic surgeon Dr. Henry Garazo is board certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery and has been selected one of America's Top Plastic Surgeons by Consumers' Research Council of America for four consecutive years. He practices in his hometown of Hagerstown, Maryland, at The Galleria, 1140 Conrad Court, Hagerstown, Md., 21740-5905. Reach him at (301) 791-1800 or [www.plasticsurgeryservices.net](http://www.plasticsurgeryservices.net).

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#### Summary

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