

Press conference, February 26, 2026, Michigan State Legislature

On behalf of Representative Sharon MacDonel & Senator Stephanie Chang.
(Matthew Dargay and Drew Marsh, respective legislative aides)

The National Board of Diving & Hyperbaric Medical Technology is a long-standing custodian of hyperbaric safety and compliance, principally through its highly regarded certification programs. Some 5,000 health care professionals have achieved certification over the past four plus decades. The National Board was pleased to have been invited to participate in the development of these bills.

It should be noted here that in the right hands, and only in the right hands, the practice of hyperbaric medicine is considered a mastered medical technology and enjoys an impressive safety record. Hospital-based and hospital affiliated programs that, by definition, are fully compliant with the many oversight authorities characterize those right hands.

There are some independent/private held hyperbaric programs that strive to emulate these standards. However, many fail to do so, and it is these latter programs that represent the primary focus of the two bills.

The four hyperbaric chamber fire deaths here in the US during this century share certain traits. They occurred in privately owned facilities. These facilities focused their marketing and promotion on wholly unproven uses in violation of FDA regulations. These same facilities lacked a requisite culture of hyperbaric safety in the opinion of the National Board and as referenced within certain legal proceedings, along with evidence found at the scene, and all appeared motivated more by profit, according to investigative and legal opinions in three of the four fatal cases.

If I can further advance the “in the right hands” argument, the last hyperbaric chamber fire within the hospital setting here in the USA was back in 1989. That the chamber’s occupants survived unharmed was a direct consequence of a fully compliant facility staffed by well-trained and capable personnel who embodied the very essence of operational safety. The distinction between these two hyperbaric practice settings could be more apparent and these bills, should they be enacted, will serve to close that gap.

Dick Clarke, President