

May 2, 2025

Re: Written Testimony for HB 3824A

As a physical therapist practicing in Oregon, the passage of **HB 3824A** is vitally important because it recognizes the essential role that physical therapists (PTs) play in Oregon's healthcare system, as well as the rigorous training, education, and experience that PTs bring to patient care.

In **Eugene-Springfield**, where I practice, I once worked with a patient recovering from a major knee injury. I monitored their mobility and progress closely, and it became clear they needed a temporary disability placard to manage daily tasks. However, under current Oregon law, only a physician or certain other providers can certify the application. With a shortage of primary care providers and **long wait times** for appointments, the patient was left without necessary accommodations during a critical phase of their recovery. **HB 3824A** would address this gap by allowing licensed PTs—who are already evaluating and treating these mobility limitations—to certify disability placard applications, ensuring that patients receive timely support without unnecessary delays.

When a high school athlete in rural Oregon—such as those in **Lake, Malheur, Grant, or Wallowa Counties**—twists their knee during practice, their local physical therapist may suspect a ligament injury requiring immediate imaging. But because Oregon law currently prohibits PTs from ordering imaging, the family is forced to either wait for a physician's referral (which can take **weeks**) or travel to an urgent care clinic, often far from home. This delay not only increases out-of-pocket costs and strains urgent care resources, but it also risks worsening the injury. **HB 3824A** would allow PTs to order necessary imaging directly, ensuring timely, **cost-effective care**—especially in rural communities where medical access is already limited. Over **10 other states** have taken similar steps to reduce patient costs and improve outcomes by ensuring timeliness of care.

Rural cities and towns stand to benefit the most from **HB 3824A**, as it allows physical therapists to practice in alignment with modern standards. In places like **Lakeview, John Day, and Enterprise**, my colleagues work with patients suffering from chronic pain who could benefit from dry needling. However, Oregon law currently prohibits them from offering this effective treatment—despite the fact that it is available in **46 other states**. Some patients have even traveled to **Idaho** just to access dry needling. **HB 3824A** would ensure that rural Oregonians have access to **safe, evidence-based treatments** closer to home.

HB 3824A also enhances **consumer protection** by ensuring that only individuals who have earned a **Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree** can use the title "Doctor of Physical Therapy" or "DPT." This prevents confusion and fraud, ensuring patients know they are receiving care from qualified professionals. By clarifying the use of professional titles, **HB 3824A**

strengthens transparency and helps protect consumers from misleading claims, ultimately preventing injury.

With the rise of digital communication, patients and healthcare providers now interact through text messages, emails, and other electronic means. However, current Oregon law lacks clear authority to address misconduct in these newer forms of communication. **HB 3824A** would close this gap by adopting updated language from the PT Model Practice Act, ensuring the licensing board has the authority to investigate all forms of misconduct—whether verbal, physical, or digital. This modern approach ensures **patient safety** and strengthens professional accountability in today's evolving communication landscape.

I strongly encourage you to support **HB 3824A** to advance healthcare equity, improve accountability, and ensure patient-centered care for all Oregonians.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christina Howard', with a stylized, flowing script.

Christina Howard, PT, MPT, EdD