

Dear Committee Chairs:

I am an Oregon resident and doctoral student of physical therapy. I also serve as a representative of the physical therapy students of Oregon through my state association. I hope to illuminate the importance of HB3824 to gain your support.

In the last 2 decades our state, and the world, have experienced a lot of change. In this time most states have passed updates to their respective physical therapy practice acts to improve patient care and access to the profession. Now we find Oregon to be overdue.

When you meet a physical therapist, you will meet a clinician with expertise in evaluating and treating neuromuscular conditions, with scientifically demonstrated safety and efficacy in the use of diagnostic imaging, musculoskeletal sonography and dry needling. These individuals are critical components of how our medical system determines what durable medical equipment is necessary for patients in the simple, and the most complex cases. Physical therapy demonstrates a tremendous value to the public and is relied on for their knowledge and clinical judgment by other medical professions to reduce patient disability.

With the extensive training in physiology and medicine, physical therapy has the opportunity to use these skills to erase barriers to care, and reduce burden on other professions. As of now, this is true in many states, but not in Oregon. Coming from a rural community, and having heard from clinicians who treat rural populations, restricting the capabilities of clinicians reduces access to care, and increases our patients' financial burden. This also creates a frustrating environment for the physical therapist that has the skills to serve their patients, but must send them hours away to get care, or just an approval from another clinician. Physical therapists have proven to be just as effective at appropriately referring for an x-ray, but they must tell their patients to drive to another medical office for another appointment with another provider. This increases the burden on the medical system, increases cost to all parties, and is harmful to the patient by delaying their care.

As I look to step into my role as a physical therapist serving the people of Oregon, I am discouraged by the limitations placed on me and my skills in this state. Other states provide me the opportunity to treat to the top of my license and use skills that I have to enhance patient outcomes while reducing financial burden. Looking at another decade of projected national workforce shortages, I am concerned that Oregon will still limit physical therapists in treating at the best level possible, or worse, be without the movement experts of medicine that our public needs.

Another aspect of this bill is term protection. My doctoral level studies and national licence earn me “DPT” as a representation of my education and licence to practice, but any person with a highschool diploma is now able to use these credentials as a “Dynamic Personal Trainer”. Should you take a moment to explore this term, the companies using it have “DPT” on the uniforms of their employees and all over their websites. Although this is disappointing to me as a future clinician, this also poses a risk to public safety. It would be completely inappropriate for a dynamic personal trainer to provide any medical or rehabilitative care within the scope of physical therapy. So how is the public to know the difference, or who to trust with their health if they operate with the same credentials?

I am passionate about the health of my neighbors and all Oregonians. That is exactly what put me on the path I am on today. Please place your support in HB3824 so that all practicing physical therapists in Oregon can effectively contribute to the public’s health.

Thank you,

Terran Coblentz Hernandez

APTA Oregon - Student Leadership Committee Representative