

Submitter: Lisa Flexner
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3824

Dear Senate Committee on Health Care Members:

I am writing in support of HB 3824A, the PT Modernization Act. I am a licensed physical therapist of nearly 20 years' experience, with a fellowship in Orthopedic Manual Physical Therapy and specialties in spine and complex musculoskeletal and pain conditions like scoliosis and Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome. I am an educator who helped found the Doctor of Physical Therapy program at OSU-Cascades in 2021. I've taught at University of Washington's DPT program and currently have adjunct faculty appointments at Pacific University in Hillsboro and at Tufts University in Seattle. And I'm a strong advocate for legislative change to align legal statute with current practice.

HB 3824A aligns the practice of physical therapy in Oregon with the Model Practice Act established by the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy – in some cases, like dry needling, expanding care that is available in 46 others states, but currently not available in Oregon. Rather than asking legislators to make repeated and incremental changes, HB 3824A asks legislators to make one big - but not bold! - change that will support health, healthcare settings, and patients across Oregon. Big change but not bold, because the changes requested are ways physical therapists already practice and support patients across the United States - evidence-based, effective, cost-efficient, and patient-centered.

But I'm not actually writing you as a PT here. I'm writing as a patient with over 30 years of chronic back pain. In college, I had to take incompletes in many classes because I couldn't sit long enough to complete term papers. Every year in my 20s and 30s, I missed at least a week of work because I couldn't get out of bed due to back spasms. In my mid-30s, an injury led to seven years of worsening pain and decreasing function, even as I was training to become a physical therapist. I had access to some of the best PTs, acupuncturists and massage therapists in Seattle yet my symptoms were at best held at bay. I couldn't exercise, could barely do my PT exercises. I was often on light-duty at work. My PT told me my back wouldn't support a pregnancy, and my physician - a physiatrist and specialist in back pain - suggested I needed to walk with a cane for the rest of my life. I was not yet 40.

In 2013, I went to Wisconsin for a continuing education course on Scoliosis. The clinic where I was training performed dry needling, which had just been added to Wisconsin's practice act. (Side note: 2013 to 2025 = 12 years of safe and effective practice in Wisconsin.) On a whim, I booked an appointment. In just FIFTEEN

MINUTES of dry needling, my persistent pain and tension was gone. Gone. I touched my toes for the first time in years. My mind was absolutely blown.

Best of all, the change meant that I could start exercising, moving, and strengthening in all the ways my PTs had been trying to do before - but this time, it worked. And it kept working. I was 41 when I received 15 minutes of dry needling. I just turned 53, and in the last 12 years, I've had just two debilitating episodes, not 2 a year.

I am a highly skilled PT, and I had excellent PT AND excellent acupuncture, and it wasn't enough. Dry needling made the difference, and made PT and acupuncture even more effective. Dry needling is NOT acupuncture; it merely uses the same tool, much like an orthopedic surgeon and a general contractor might both use a hammer.

No one likes a turf war, especially not legislators. This bill, which passed the House 52-2, does so much more than allow dry needling. Don't let it be defeated because of baseless arguments about one issue. Please move this bill forward and modernize healthcare practice in Oregon.

Thank you,

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