

Submitter: Jennifer Hurth
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3824

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and Members of the Committee:
My name is Jennifer Hurth, and I live in Portland, Oregon. I am writing in opposition to HB 3824, specifically the inclusion of “needle insertion” on page 3, line 37, which seeks to expand the scope of practice for physical therapists.

This provision poses serious legal, ethical, and patient safety concerns. It also directly conflicts with existing Oregon law, undermines established regulatory oversight, and significantly lowers standards for invasive medical procedures.

1. Needle-Based Procedures Require Precision and Extensive Training

Needling is not a low-risk intervention. It often involves insertion into muscles, joints, and anatomical regions located near vital structures such as the lungs, major blood vessels, and nerves. Improper technique can cause serious complications—including pneumothorax, nerve damage, and vascular injury.

Licensed acupuncturists in Oregon undergo 2,500–3,500 hours of training, including over 800 hours of supervised clinical practice. In contrast, dry needling certification courses for physical therapists typically range from just 20 to 100 hours. Lowering the training standard for such invasive procedures jeopardizes patient safety and devalues the protections currently in place.

2. Legal Conflict with Oregon Statutes

HB 3824 conflicts with Oregon law in several ways:

Under ORS 677.757(1)(a), acupuncture is defined as the stimulation of specific points on the body “by the insertion of needles.”

ORS 677.759 requires that only individuals licensed by the Oregon Medical Board may perform acupuncture.

ORS 677.765 states that unlicensed practice constitutes the unauthorized practice of medicine.

Dry needling—as described in HB 3824—is functionally identical to acupuncture under Oregon law. Allowing physical therapists, who are not regulated by the Oregon Medical Board, to perform needle insertion would therefore be inconsistent with current statutes.

3. HB 3824 Undermines Existing Oversight

The Acupuncture Advisory Committee, established under ORS 677.780–785, was created to advise the Oregon Medical Board on standards for acupuncture education, licensure, and scope. HB 3824 bypasses this structure entirely by granting an invasive procedure to a profession not subject to OMB oversight.

This undermines the regulatory system that was carefully designed to protect the public from harm and maintain clinical standards.