



Representative Bill Reineke

Sponsor Testimony HB 131

May 10, 2017

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Antonio and Members of the Health Committee, thank you for allowing me to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 131. House Bill 131 will make crucial updates to the practice act for physical therapists in Ohio.

House Bill 131 is common sense legislation that makes two important updates. Under current Ohio law, physical therapists (PTs) can evaluate and assess, but the law does not specify that they can diagnose. The bill clarifies that “physical therapy” includes determining a diagnosis in order to treat the person’s physical impairments, functional limitations, and physical disabilities; determining a prognosis; and determining a plan of therapeutic intervention. The bill also allows the ordering of appropriate tests, including diagnostic imaging and studies, that are performed and interpreted by other licensed health care professionals.

Physical therapists are highly educated, licensed health care professionals who can help patients reduce pain and improve or restore mobility, in many cases without expensive surgery and often reducing the need for long-term use of prescription medications and their side effects or dependence. Recent studies show that when PT treatment is initiated early in a pain condition, it can reduce healthcare costs for the patient and decrease levels of long-term disability and work loss.

A physical therapist should be able to make a differential diagnosis in order to determine if a patient’s condition is within the physical therapist’s scope of practice, or whether the PT needs to refer the patient to an alternative health care provider. PTs are licensed by the State Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Athletic Trainers Licensure Boards (OT, PT, AT). Many other professionals licensed under Ohio law are able to make an appropriate diagnosis of their patient’s condition—such as psychologists, social workers, chiropractors, physicians, and optometrists—in order to determine how to treat the patient. This legislation will include Physical Therapists to that list.

All PT education programs in Ohio, and nationwide, are a Doctorate of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree and are CAPTE–accredited. This advanced curriculum includes differential diagnosis, and

how to apply this knowledge when making a referral to other healthcare professionals. Ohio PTs are trained and qualified to make a diagnosis for physical therapy.

This legislation better reflects the way PTs practice in all settings, where both in-patient and out-patients are evaluated for problems that affect their ability to move. The evaluation helps the PT determine what is specifically wrong with the patient. The PT must then make a diagnosis in order to determine the appropriate treatment plan. By updating the PT practice act, patients will be saving valuable time and money while focusing on their health.

Additionally, allowing a PT to order appropriate imaging eliminates the timely step of going back to a general practitioner for such a referral. Eliminating this step saves on unnecessary insurance billing, out of pocket costs to patients and lost time in the treatment process. HB 131 does not allow a physical therapist to interpret such test, the imaging would still need to be performed and interpreted by other licensed healthcare professionals.

I have heard from many physical therapists in my district. The practice limitations in the current law affect their ability to practice every day. There are countless reasons why someone could have difficulty walking: weakness of the muscle itself, weakness because of a neurological condition, joint range of motion limitation just to name a few. Each of these underlying causes are treated very differently and PTs must evaluate the patient and make a diagnosis so they can move forward with the best plan to treat the patient. If a PT evaluation reveals something that does not fit a musculoskeletal or neuromuscular pattern, which is within the scope of practice, it is also within their scope of practice to refer that patient to another health care provider.

This legislation is supported by the Ohio Physical Therapy Association (OPTA).

Thank you for recognizing the value of updating the current PT practice act. We appreciate the opportunity to testify today this issue and would be happy to answer any questions at this time.