

HB 49
Testimony of Victoria Gresh, CAE
Executive Director of the Ohio Physical Therapy Association
March 8, 2017

Good afternoon, Chairman Faber and Members of the House Finance Subcommittee on State Government and Agency Review. My name is Victoria Gresh and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Physical Therapy Association (OPTA). I am here today to present testimony on behalf of the 3,400 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants and students of physical therapy that we represent in Ohio. OPTA is part of the 98,000 members nationwide of the American Physical Therapy Association.

OPTA is opposed to the proposed merger of the Ohio Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Athletic Trainers Board with the State Board of Orthotics, Prosthetics, and Pedorthics into the State Physical Health Services Board as outlined in the HB 49, for the following reasons:

1) There is No Savings to the Taxpayer.

Under the current operational structure, license fees from physical therapists, occupational therapists and athletic trainers pays for all board operations. There are no General Revenue Funds used to support the functions of the board. The current board structure is funded by license fees of the more than 17,600 physical therapists, 10,300 occupational therapists, and 2,500 athletic trainers. These license fees render the board self-sufficient and, in fact, produce a net positive to the state. There will be no savings to the taxpayer, because there is no expense to the taxpayer.

The current operational structure is fiscally sound and working as intended. We believe strongly there is no need for restructure.

2) There Would Be a Huge Disparity of Knowledge in the Proposed Board Restructure.

All physical therapy programs in the United States are doctorate level programs. This means that every PT program produces Doctors of Physical Therapy. In addition, Ohio has some of the most stringent continuing education requirements and delivers some of the most respected professionals in the country. Our members wear this as a badge of honor. Physical therapy continuing education programs applied to license renewal must be directly related to the Physical Therapy Practice Act in Ohio. The current PT Section, comprised of practicing physical therapists, spends considerable time addressing issues specific to the Practice Act, of which orthotists, pedorthists and prosthetists have no direct knowledge.

Similar to other medical professionals, physical therapists obtain specialty certifications in areas such as acute care, geriatrics, cardio and pulmonary, women's health, education, orthopedics, neurology and pediatrics, to name a few. Physical therapists have also been on the forefront of addressing Ohio's opioid epidemic through public education of our national #ChoosePT campaign. In Ohio we have promoted the utilization of physical therapy as a first choice in treatment in our war on opioid abuse. We believe this advanced knowledge of complex healthcare issues cannot be adequately addressed by orthotists, pedorthists and prosthetists, and the new structure would be a significant detriment to the integrity of the profession and could diminish needed oversight to protect the public.

3) The Continued Increase in Number of Licensees in Ohio Requires Increased Oversight.

With 32 current PT and PTA programs, and potentially two additional programs under construction, Ohio yields a significant number of the best and brightest graduates each year. While this continues to have a positive impact on Ohio's workforce, it also necessitates increased oversight of a profession that continues to evolve and advance at a rapid pace.

As noted in the proposed restructure, this board is responsible for the timely renewal of approximately 30,000 licenses and the issuance of approximately 2,000 initial licenses every two years. Licensed physical therapists and physical therapist assistants are also randomly audited by the PT Section on their renewal year to ensure proper continuing education compliance. The date of turnover of the proposed board restructure, January 21, 2018 is significant—physical therapy license renewal is January 31, 2018. This means there would be one, possibly two, physical therapists on the licensure board with the knowledge and expertise to guide the enforcement, correspondence and continuing education of almost 18,000 physical therapists in Ohio upon renewal.

If the goal of the licensure board is to provide essential oversight of peers in the profession to maintain Ohio's high standards, restructuring a highly functional, efficient and fiscally sound board is not the way to achieve this.

It is important to note that OPTA does not oppose language in HB 49 that seeks to address the antitrust concerns related to the U.S. Supreme Court decision against the North Carolina Board of Dental Examiners. OPTA supports any safeguards that would protect licensure boards and the appointed board members from costly legal action.

In closing, the Ohio Physical Therapy Association recommends no changes to the current board structure, and we appreciate the opportunity to have continued dialogue and remain positive contributors to the legislative process. I will be happy to answer any questions at this time.