

HB 49
Testimony of Victoria Gresh, CAE
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Good afternoon, Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Tavares and Members of the Senate Health and Medicaid Subcommittee. 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 3,500 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants and students of physical therapy that we represent in Ohio. OPTA is part of the 98,000 (and growing) members nationwide of the American Physical Therapy Association. We are on track to reach our goal of 100,000 members this year.

OPTA supports the language in Sub. HB 49 which leaves the current OTPTAT Board intact for the following reasons:

1) The Current Board Structure is Self Sufficient—and Working.

Under the current operational structure, license fees from physical therapists, occupational therapists and athletic trainers pays for all board operations. 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.

The current operational structure is fiscally sound and working as intended.

2) The Current Board Structure Supports the Demanding Educational Requirements of the Profession.

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, and the current PT Section, comprised of practicing physical therapists, spends considerable time addressing issues specific to the Practice Act.

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 can only be addressed by qualified and licensed peers in the profession.

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.

The OTPTAT 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 continued expertise of the physical therapists on 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 is essential.

If the goal of the licensure board is to provide essential oversight of peers in the profession to maintain Ohio's high standards, keeping the current structure intact the way to achieve this.

It is important to note that OPTA also supports the language in Sub. 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 supports the current OTPTAT board structure in Sub. HB 49 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.