

Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee

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Tonya Apke, PT, DPT, OCS

Proponent – House Bill 131

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Beagle, Ranking Member Tavares and all members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today in support of Sub House Bill 131. My name is Dr. Tonya Apke and I am the current President of the Ohio Physical Therapy Association and I am also an Assistant Professor and the Director of Clinical Education for the physical therapy program at the Ohio State University.

I completed my Bachelor's Degree at Miami University and my Master's of Physical Therapy at Hahnemann University in Philadelphia (now Drexel University) in 1991. I then completed my Doctorate of Physical Therapy at AT Still University in Mesa, AZ in 2005. I worked in an acute care hospital for 2 years and then at an outpatient practice for 5 years before entering academia. I have continued working in the clinic ever since. I have been a board certified specialist in orthopedics since 2002. I was an Assistant Professor and Clinical Education Coordinator at Mt. St. Joseph University in Cincinnati for 9 years before coming to OSU.

Physical therapists in Ohio and throughout the country are rigorously educated, with all PTs graduating with a doctorate of physical therapy degree. I can speak directly to the competitiveness of admission to physical therapy programs. Ohio State in particular is one of the top 10 PT schools in the nation. Our average undergraduate GPA is a 3.8. I am very proud of the education we provide and I am confident that our graduates go on to provide high quality care to patients.

OPTA believes that physical therapy is critical for short and long term injury recovery. We pride ourselves in providing recovery care without the use of opioid medications. OPTA encourages the committee to explore resources on the American Physical Therapy Associations' #choosePT campaign. I am certain you will be impressed with the efforts made by our profession to be partners in exploring and promoting alternatives to opioids in recovery and pain management.

The OPTA believes that Sub House Bill 131 will be a tool for PTs to be able to offer better and more efficient care to our patients. This legislation has been a labor of love for me, the board of directors for OPTA, and our dedicated sponsors Representatives Reineke and Gavarone. It is important for this committee to know how much work was done on this legislation during the House process and during previous General Assemblies. We participated in several interested party meetings, met numerous times with House Health Committee members, and made several significant changes to the bill along the way. All of that work resulted in unanimous passage of the bill out of committee and on the House floor. To our knowledge, there are no opponents to the bill before this committee.

Speaking specifically to provisions of House Bill 131, the legislation will update the practice act for physical therapists to specify that PTs make a diagnosis as part of their evaluation of patients in order to treat the person's physical impairments, functional limitations, and physical disabilities. This will bring Ohio in line with the more than 20 other states that allow PTs to make a diagnosis.

During our negotiations on the bill, OPTA and the bill sponsors agreed to add a definition of "physical therapy diagnosis" to the bill. That definition also includes specific language stating a "Physical therapy diagnosis" does not include a medical diagnosis.

We believe this current version of the legislation adequately addressed any perception that a Physical Therapist would be diagnosing or providing care outside of their scope of practice.

Chairman Burke, members of the committee, thank you for your consideration of HB 131. We hope that you can be supportive of passing this legislation.