



Maryland Occupational Therapy Association

PO Box 131 ♦ Stevenson, Maryland 21153 ♦ mota.memberlodge.org

Committee: House Health and Government Operations Committee

Bill Number: House Bill 576

Title: Health Occupations – Athletic Training – Revisions

Hearing Date: February 18, 2020

Position: Support with Amendment

The Maryland Occupational Therapy Association (MOTA) supports *House Bill 576 – Health Occupations – Athletic Training – Revisions*. The bill expands the type of patients to whom athletic trainers can provide services. The bill also removes setting restrictions and proposes general updates to the language.

MOTA supports updating the statute for athletic trainers, as we recognize that some of the statutory framework is awkward. We also agree that there is some room for expanding the types of patients who athletic trainers can treat. We think the bill is too broad in several areas. If adopted, the amendments we propose would:

- **Whom Athletic Trainers Treat:** Under current law, athletic trainers may treat either professional or recreational athletes. We agree that this is too restrictive. Athletic trainers have the background and education to support the conditioning of professions that are physically active and require a high level of physical functioning. Examples are supporting the training of police officers and fire fighters. Our amendments reflect this expanded patient population to be included in the definition of “athlete”.

As drafted, we think the bill presents two challenges:

- Athletic trainers could provide services to conditioning and treatment to almost every active adult. Athletic trainers are educated to provide services to primarily healthy populations, i.e. athletes; and we have concerns about the impact on patients with serious health conditions. We note that the statute does not provide for an evaluation to determine that the patient is healthy before services are provided.
- Athletic trainers could provide rehabilitation for general injuries. Athletic trainers are well-suited to provide services to support patients with athletic injuries, but it does not appear

as though their training is as broad as other types of rehabilitation professionals to ensure the safety of the patient.

- **Where Athletic Trainers Provide Treatment:** The current statutory framework restricts athletic trainers to certain settings. The bill proposes to remove those restrictions. We agree with this, as it does not matter where athletic trainers provide services. In any setting, just as other health care professionals, athletic trainers have to practice within their scope of practice and follow clinical standards of care. Our amendments preserve the bill's proposed removal of setting restrictions.
- **What Athletic Training Includes:** The current statutory framework recognizes that athletic trainers can provide assessments and immediate care. The bill proposes to add several functions, including diagnosis and referrals.
 - We do not believe the term “diagnosis” reflects what athletic trainers are permitted to do. A diagnosis means the clinician determines the underlying illness. We believe that the athletic trainers can conduct an “assessment” which means examining and noting the patient’s current physical state. Our amendments suggest removing the term “diagnosis.”
 - We believe that it is appropriate to clarify that athletic trainers may make referrals related to athletic injuries. The bill language suggests that athletic trainers may make referrals for any type of condition, which could be as broad as treatment for diabetes or behavioral health issues. We do not think it is the intent for the referral language to be this broad, so we have recommended a clarification in our amendments.

Thank you for your consideration of our amendments. We look forward to working with the bill sponsors and the Committee as the bill moves forward. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net or (443) 926-3443.

