

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 551

(Delegate Bhandari, *et al.*)

Health and Government Operations

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Health Occupations - Physical Therapists and Physical Therapist Assistants -
Qualifications

This bill requires an applicant for a physical therapist assistant license educated in limited physical therapy outside of the United States to have graduated from a program that in the year of graduation has educational requirements equivalent to a degree from an accredited program in the United States. For applicants educated in the United States, the bill clarifies that an applicant for a physical therapist license must have graduated from a program approved by the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) *or accredited by* the Commission on the Accreditation *in* Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) rather than approved by the American Medical Association or APTA. An applicant for a physical therapist assistant license must have graduated from a program approved by APTA *or accredited by* CAPTE. An applicant for a physical therapy or physical therapy assistant license must have satisfactorily completed the clinical *education* (rather than training) required by the physical therapy or physical therapist assistant program. The bill also makes technical and conforming changes. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2020.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect State operations or finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: If an applicant for a physical therapy license in the State has been educated in any state, the applicant must have (1) graduated from a physical therapy program approved by the American Medical Association, APTA, or CAPTE and (2) completed the clinical training required by the physical therapy curriculum. If the applicant was educated outside of the United States, the applicant must have graduated from a program that in the year of graduation had educational requirements equivalent to a CAPTE-accredited program in the United States.

To qualify for a physical therapist assistant license, an applicant must have (1) graduated from a physical therapist assistants program approved by APTA and (2) completed the clinical training required by the curriculum for physical therapist assistants.

To apply for a physical therapy or physical therapy assistant license, an applicant must submit to the board (1) a board-approved application and (2) evidence of completion of the relevant curriculum and clinical training. Applicants must also submit to a criminal history records check and pay an application fee.

Background: Generally, in Maryland, an individual must be licensed by the State Board of Physical Therapy Examiners to practice physical therapy or limited physical therapy in the State. Licensure is not required for (1) a student who is supervised directly by a licensed physical therapist in a board-approved physical therapy educational program or (2) a physical therapy aide, if the physical therapy aide is subject to the rules and regulations adopted by the board, performs only procedures that do not require the professional skills of a licensed physical therapist or a licensed physical therapist assistant, and performs procedures only under the direct supervision of a licensed physical therapist who personally is present in the area where the procedures are performed.

Accreditation Agencies

CAPTE is nationally recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. CAPTE grants accreditation status to qualified entry-level education programs for physical therapists and physical therapist assistants.

APTA is an individual membership professional organization that represents physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and physical therapy students. APTA seeks to improve the health and quality of life of individuals in society by advancing physical therapist practice, education, research, and by increasing the awareness and understanding of physical therapy's role in the nation's health care system.

State Fiscal Effect: The State Board of Physical Therapy Examiners advises that, as the bill authorizes the board to issue license to foreign-educated physical therapist assistants whose educational program is deemed equivalent to an accredited program in the United States, the number of applicants may increase under the bill. At this time, the board is unable to determine how many additional applicants may apply. The Department of Legislative Services advises that general fund revenues and expenditures may increase with additional applicants under the bill, but the increase is not expected to materially affect State finances.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: SB 692 (Senator Klausmeier) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Health; Department of Legislative Services

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