

Good afternoon, Chairman Pinsky and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs committee. My name is Laura Marinaro and I am the program director for the professional level masters in athletic training at Salisbury University.

All of the students entering the athletic training program have completed bachelor's degrees and have the necessary prerequisite and foundational knowledge to begin a two-year, full-time program that includes comprehensive didactic education at the graduate level in addition to continuous clinical education. Athletic training students participate in interprofessional education experiences with students from other healthcare programs including nursing, respiratory therapy, physical therapy, and pharmacy.

Within the program, students are required by the athletic training accrediting body, CAATE, to be provided with clinical practice opportunities for a variety of populations including:

- Individuals throughout the lifespan (pediatric, adult, geriatric)
- Different sexes
- Different socioeconomic statuses
- Varying levels of activity and ability
- Participate in non-sport activities (military, industrial, occupational, leisure, performing arts)

From an education perspective, it's critical that we are able to provide these opportunities to our students to prepare them for the variety of practice settings they may work in following graduation. When athletic trainers are limited to specific settings and tight definitions of what constitutes an "athlete," it creates difficulty with finding an appropriate variety of clinical practice opportunities within the state of Maryland.

In addition, in my role as a program director for athletic training, I am concerned about the job placement opportunities for our graduates. Students who graduate and do not wish to work in a restrictive setting are looking for opportunities outside of the state so that they can pursue opportunities in the areas and with the individuals they wish to work.

Athletic trainers are health care providers. Our students are well-educated to provide care for a variety of individuals, under the appropriate supervision of a physician, while working in the areas of prevention and wellness, urgent and emergency care, primary care, orthopedics, rehabilitation, behavioral health, pediatrics, and performance enhancement. As health care providers, athletic trainers must pass a board certification exam, comply with state regulatory acts, and complete 50 hours of continuing education every two years, including ten hours of continuing education which is specifically evidence-based. The national examination and continuing education requirements ensure that not only are students ready for entry-level practice following graduation, but all practicing athletic trainers continue taking the appropriate steps to maintain their credentials and provide the best possible care to the individuals entrusted to them.