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Board of Physical Therapy Examiners

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**2020 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL NO: HB 551

COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations Committee

POSITION: Support

TITLE: Health Occupations – Physical Therapists and Physical Therapist Assistants – Qualifications

BILL ANALYSIS: HB 551 will permit the Board of Physical Therapy Examiners (the “Board”) to issue a physical therapist assistant (“PTA”) license to an applicant who was educated in limited physical therapy outside of any state (i.e., foreign-educated physical therapist assistants), if their program is deemed equivalent to a U.S. program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (“CAPTE”). The bill also removes the American Medical Association (the “AMA”) as an entity that approves physical therapy programs and adds CAPTE as an entity that may accredit PTA programs.

POSITION AND RATIONALE: Under the existing law, the Board may only issue a PTA license to an applicant who graduated from a program approved by the American Physical Therapy Association (the “APTA”). The APTA does not approve any foreign PTA programs (nor does CAPTE accredit any); as such, foreign-educated PTAs do not currently qualify for licensure in Maryland. Foreign-educated physical therapists, however, are eligible for licensure if their foreign physical therapy program is deemed equivalent, in the year of graduation, to a CAPTE-accredited program. The same organization that determines equivalency for foreign physical therapy programs, the Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapy, has an equivalency tool used by other states to determine equivalency for foreign PTA programs. The Board believes equity and access to care would both be served if the Board is given the authority to license foreign-educated PTAs.

Importantly, legislation passed in 2019 (Chapter 374) made Maryland part of the Interstate Physical Therapy Licensure Compact (the “Compact”). Pursuant to the Compact, PTAs licensed

in other compact states will be eligible for a Compact privilege to practice in Maryland. Because some other states license foreign-educated PTAs, non-resident foreign-educated PTAs with a Compact privilege will be able to practice in Maryland while foreign-trained PTAs residing in Maryland remain ineligible for licensure in the State. The Board hopes to close this unintended loophole with the proposed legislation.

HB 551 also cleans up language pertaining to applicant requirements for physical therapist and PTA licenses. The AMA is a trade organization that represents the interests of physicians. It does not approve or accredit physical therapy programs or physical therapist assistant programs. Therefore, reference of physical therapy programs approved by the AMA is removed in this bill. Further, CAPTE accredits PTA programs just like it accredits physical therapy programs. Therefore, the bill adds PTA programs accredited by CAPTE to approved PTA programs.

The Board respectfully requests a favorable vote on HB 551.

For more information, please contact Isaac Okehie, Acting Executive Director, Maryland Board of Physical Therapy Examiners at 410-764-4716 or ogui.okehie@maryland.gov.

The opinion of the Board expressed in this document does not necessarily reflect that of the Maryland Department of Health or the Administration.