

February 18, 2020

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee
241 House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: **SUPPORT HB 576 – Health Occupations Athletic Training – Revisions**

Dear Chair Pendergrass:

I urge you to support HB576 to enhance public safety and the readiness of Maryland's military, law enforcement and first responder community.

My name is Brian McGuire and please understand that my views and opinions are not the official position of the Department of Defense or the Marine Corps.

I'd like to provide you information on the use of Athletic Trainers (ATs) in the military. As I will point out, we have made extensive use of them to improve our readiness.

As a federal employee, I serve as the Marine Corps Force Fitness Program Manager in Quantico, VA. I also work part time in the NFL as Lead Athletic Trainer for the Scouting Combine and as a game day Injury Spotter in Washington and Baltimore. In 2016, I retired as a Colonel from the Marine Corps Reserve.

At Quantico I manage human performance programs, all aimed at enhancing the readiness of Marines. The program I'd like to focus on today is the Sports Medicine and Injury Prevention program which was started in 2003.

The problem of musculoskeletal injuries in the Marine Corps and other services is profound. Injuries costs the Marine Corps \$111 million dollars and 356,000 lost duty days per year. These injuries are the same for the NFL athletes I work with and the athletes when I was a student at Salisbury University.

To attack this problem, in 2003 the Commandant of the Marine Corps authorized a pilot program where 8 Athletic Trainers were hired to work at Parris Island, San Diego, Camp Pendleton, Camp Lejeune and Quantico. The purpose of the program was to decrease attrition and lost work days associated with musculoskeletal injuries.

The pilot program had the intended effect. At San Diego for example, Medical Rehabilitation Platoon assignments dropped by 57% resulting in a reduction of over 42000 lost work days. This equates to a cost avoidance of over \$72 million dollars.

Due to program success, the number of ATs grew by 250% in a four year period. In 2017, the program was expanded to the Fleet Marine Force and by the end of Fiscal Year 23, nearly 100 ATs will be working Corps-wide in the US and overseas. This \$10 million dollar investment per year is significant but worth it as the data show.

The Fleet Marine Force is already realizing benefits from expansion of the program. From one of our 3 star Commanders: “The ATs have proven very helpful in cutting down the ortho injuries, which is the number one cause of our medical attrition.”

Injury prevention is where the ATs have shown their biggest value. In the military, we refer to this as getting at injuries “left of bang” or before they occur, with “bang” being the injury. The ATs develop physical training programs, deliver injury prevention classes, and provide nutrition education among many other human performance optimization measures.

Other military branches use ATs as well. Overall, there are close to 500 ATs serving in the US military. With these numbers, it’s difficult to imagine where family members of this committee who have chosen to serve recently have not in some way benefited from the services of ATs.

Civilian public safety requires a high level of readiness in its supporting personnel just as it does for Marines. Therefore I urge you to support HB 576.

Sincerely,

X Brian J. McGuire

Brian J. McGuire

Signed by: MCGUIRE.BRIAN.JOHN.1045041707

Brian J. McGuire
Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps, Ret.