

February 18, 2022

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky
Chair, Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West Wing
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: **SUPPORT SB 0711** – Health Occupations – Licensed Athletic Trainers – Dry Needling Registration

Dear Chair Pinsky:

My name is Wes Robinson and I am joining others from across the nation in support of the Maryland Athletic Trainers' Association's efforts to expand Dry Needling to Licensed Athletic Trainers in the state of Maryland.

As a dual credentialed Physical Therapist and Athletic Trainer for over 20 years, I can clearly speak to the link between these two health occupations. While there are significant differences, there are many overlaps. This can be attested to by the cooperation between the two governing bodies – The National Athletic Trainers' Association and The American Physical Therapy Association. Each now working actively together to provide for better patient outcomes for patients of all ages and backgrounds. As these two professions continued to pave the way for collaboration, the MATA would hope the state of Maryland would follow suit and allow Athletic Trainers to perform Dry Needling.

This move would be consistent with many other states and follow in accordance with the training standards set forth by several educational outlets that train health care professionals in the modality of Dry Needling. One must ask, why would a business risk educating an individual in an invasive technique if that individual was not exquisitely qualified to perform the task? Doing so would be a perilous move for these corporations. Yet we see that every day, throughout the United States, groups offering the same Dry Needling certification and education to Athletic Trainers and Physical Therapist alike.

Athletic Trainers have a wide skill set and are clearly educated to a level to perform this task. Certainly, there will be discussion about the need for Doctoral level education as a prerequisite for Dry Needling, as many Physical Therapy Programs now offer a DPT degree. This is a false narrative excuse as there are many Physical Therapist that do not hold a doctorate degree throughout the US and Maryland. These Physical Therapist not only safely practice but perform Dry Needling without a doctorate degree. The writer of this letter is among them. Having twenty years of experience means I graduated well before doctorate degrees in PT were common place. Yet I completed my post graduate training in Dry Needling and safely and effectively perform this modality on my patients. I do this under my physical therapy license, as I cannot currently under my athletic training license. Sadly, many of my constituents are not dual credentialed and therefore their patient population is missing out on this effective modality. To be clear, there is no doctoral degree requirement to perform Dry Needling by any profession, in any state or by any certification course.

In 2010 the physical therapists were on the other side of this fight, working against the acupuncturist to allow for their ability to perform dry needling. I site the decision from the Officially Published Opinion of Attorney General Doug Gansler as it is relevant to our current discussion:

“It is frequently the case that the scopes of practice of two occupations overlap. There is nothing intrinsically amiss about legislative authorization for two separate health occupations to perform some of the same acts.”

“Depending on the statutory scheme, the same activities could fall within the scope of practice of two separate health occupations.”

“The licensing statutes presume that there are areas of overlap among the scopes of practice of various health care professions.”

“In providing for overlapping scopes of practice for various health care professions, the General Assembly has fostered consumer choice in the selection of treatment and practitioner.”

Dry Needling is a tool or modality used by licensed health care providers. It is an advanced technique that requires additional training. That training is required by this proposed legislation and should not be restricted to only certain health care practitioners. It should be limited to those that obtain that certification and there is no justification to limit this modality from Athletic Trainers and their patients. I urge you to support SB 0711 so we can increase the patient population in Maryland that can receive this safe and effective modality.

Thank you for your time.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wes Robinson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wes Robinson, ATC PT
Past - President
Maryland Athletic Trainers' Association