

Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair  
Health and Government Operations Committee  
Room 241 House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

February 13, 2023

**Re: HB 172 – UNFAVORABLE – Health Occupations – Licensed Athletic Trainers – Dry Needling Registration**

Dear Chairwoman Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Committee:

I am contacting you as a DC constituent who has an acupuncture practice in Maryland, regarding Maryland SB 232 allowing athletic trainers to provide dry needling, and to express my strong opposition. Should this bill pass, and allow athletic trainers to use the appropriated technique described as dry needling, Maryland patients are at risk of grave harm including punctured lungs, infection, nerve damage, and more. I am also a licensed RN working at Suburban Hospital and we too often have patients come to our Emergency department with pneumothorax (punctured lung) due to dry needling by non-acupuncturists.

According to the National Certification Commission of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM), the minimum training to be certified is a 3-year master's degree program. In addition to a minimum required 660 supervised clinical hours in the use of needles, licensed acupuncturists are required to have a minimum of 450 hours of biomedicine. The NCCAOM also administers an exam prior to certification. This is in comparison to the proposed 40 hours of supervised needling proposed in this legislation, with no training standards, requirement of certification, or continuing education.

Multiple medical boards, professional organizations, and certifying bodies, including CMS, AMA, AAMA, AAPMR have concluded that not only is dry needling the practice of acupuncture, but that it's practice should be limited to providers with extensive training in the use of filiform needles such as trained physicians and licensed acupuncturists going back to 2012.

According to American Medical Association (AMA) policy H-410.949 from 2016, "Our AMA recognizes dry needling as an invasive procedure and maintains that dry needling should only be performed by practitioners with standard training and familiarity with routine use of needles in their practice, such as licensed medical physicians and licensed acupuncturists."

The use of filiform needles for medical purposes is part of a larger system of traditional medicine that has long faced disparagement from the medical community at large and must be practiced with the proper context and training. Acupuncture practice involves an entirely separate system of examination, diagnosis, and treatment that informs licensed acupuncturists not only where to place the needles but provides the why and when. It is not enough to know simple anatomy, but knowledge of the larger systemic effects of using needles is necessary for public safety. Not just to avoid physical harm, but also the financial harm of ineffective treatment at best, and additional treatment needed to combat adverse effects at worst.

Physicians require 300 hours of additional training in order to perform acupuncture, and athletic trainers are requesting to be approved with an 80-hour course. Athletic trainers are also seeking to expand their scope to include an invasive procedure which they have no training for, without going through the necessary process of a change to their statute. Furthermore, the Medical Board has already testified that

they have no mechanism in place to perform the required supervision of athletic trainers in the state of Maryland.

For all these reasons, I am asking you to oppose HB172.

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