

Date: 02/13/2024

To: Chair Pena-Melnyk and Vice Chair Cullison of the Health and Government Operations Committee

Reference: HB0865- Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance-Coverage for Orthoses and Protheses

Position: **Support/Favorable**

Dear Chair, Pena-Melnyk and Committee Members,

We are grateful for the opportunity to share our comments on House Bill 865 and to encourage your support for this piece of legislation. We are a collection of orthotic and prosthetic companies (clinics) that serve patients across the state of Maryland. We provide care for patients who require orthoses and prostheses across a wide range of diagnoses. Those who write in support of HB 865 today include clinicians who directly serve our patients, technicians who fabricate their unique prosthetic and orthotic devices, and the administrators who keep our offices running smoothly. Every day, we live our patients' hardships and struggles to reach their goals alongside them. We do our best to support them in reaching their goals, whether that be standing, walking, returning to work, running, swimming, or the many other activities our patients desire to engage in. We have seen firsthand the impact that having the right device has on a patient's life. Having the right device can make an enormous difference in a patient's mental, emotional, and physical health. Below is a collection of testimony from a variety of individuals who ask for your support of HB0865:

- I find that insurance companies make it difficult for patients to get the devices that will truly help them to be more than "Just" mobile. A lot of effort must go into the justification of a more complex device or components that are an upgrade to provide the patient with better fit and function
- As a college student and prosthetist, I have dedicated a lot of time volunteering for adaptive sporting programs, including snowboarding/skiing, cycling, running, and volleyball. I have also been fortunate to work clinically with more young, active persons with amputations than a lot of other clinicians. I have seen first-hand how much difference the proper prosthesis, similar to having the right tool for a job, can make for a person's mobility and quality of life. Mobility and physical activity should not be a luxury and are essential to maintaining a healthy lifestyle and good quality of life.
- I see many high activity patients that are limited from engaging in higher activities due to insufficient response and function or fear of breaking their only prosthesis.

- I am a clinician working at the Hanger Clinic, who treats pediatric and adult patients in Maryland. When meeting a patient for the first time, we do a thorough interview with our patients, to get to know them better and to get an idea of what their goals and expectations are. For our pediatric patients, being able to run, jump, play and keep up with their peers is always one of their top goals. For our adult patients, increasing their activity level, being able to engage themselves physically and mentally are some of their top goals. Being able to provide prosthetic components and orthotic devices (braces) which are designed for specialty activities (eg running, skiing, swimming) would remove barriers keeping our patients from pursuing the lifestyle they had before their injury or amputation and opening new opportunities and improving the physical and mental well-being.
- Activity specific orthoses and prostheses would allow my patients greater flexibility in the activities they can participate in and make them feel like they can do things more closely to how they were living prior to using prostheses and/or orthoses.
- Please allow amputees to live a functional life. Don't limit access to appropriate prosthetic care.
- It is important that everyone who has an amputation have the opportunity to receive a prosthesis that fits their needs, may include an activity specific prosthesis.
- Access to activity-specific orthoses and prostheses enables those affected by limb loss and limb difference to lead healthier lives. Insurance coverage for these devices helps O&P clinicians provide equitable care for patients of all ages. It is our goal to break down barriers and limitations for patients.
- I have multiple pediatric patients that are unable to participate fully in school activities/events or even physical education classes because their devices for walking do not allow them to do things like jump, run, lift weights, without risk or injury to themselves or risk of damaging their devices. Damage to their orthosis or prosthesis could result in weeks or potentially months out of their device - weeks or months of not being able to walk and multiple days of missed school for medical appointments - which can have a profound impact not only on their physical development and wellbeing, but also their social interactions among their peers (isolation by not being able to participate in group activities) and their education (needing to miss classes repeatedly for repairs). In a similar vein, adult patients may not be able to participate in higher impact activities such as running or playing basketball, or even low impact activities like hiking, that they participated in prior to their amputations because their every day walking prosthesis is not appropriate or weight-rated for those activities. Orthoses and prostheses are not all alike, just like shoes are not made the same. A person

does not use the same pair of shoes to go to work as they would wear to go for a 6 mile hike, to walk on the beach, or to run with their dog around the neighborhood. Using the inappropriate device for a task increases risk for injury to the person and damage to the device itself.

- This is about maximizing human potential and should be viewed as an investment and not simply an expense when looking at the financial impact. People need to be active to remain healthy and the harder it is to be active the less likely it will happen. Providing this resource to the users of prostheses and orthoses is simple parity to those individuals who have access to all kinds of health care services to support an active and healthy lifestyle even those services that come with a high price tag in the short term; think ACL repair for a young (or not so young) athlete who does not want to end their career nor develop arthritis later in life.
- Having access to an activity-specific orthosis or prosthesis will significantly improve a patient's quality of life while reducing the financial burden on tax payors and insurance companies. A secondary device will reduce the chance of bodily injury, improve overall health, and avoid substantial expenditures associated with palliative care.
- We work with everyone from children to adults, of all levels and abilities. An everyday walking device does not always make a great activity device, and can hinder their ability to move well during the activity. Having access to an activity specific prosthesis or orthosis would improve quality of life for those who wish to remain as active as they can.

We would like to conclude with a real-life example, experienced by many of us, too often in our practice:

Without access to activity specific prostheses, the potential of amputees is stifled. Let's call this the "little Johnny" experience. He has been wearing a prosthesis since he was 3. He has kept up with his peers in light play, but now he is 11. He joins the local Little League team, and it turns out he's pretty darn good. One practice, his foot breaks while running to first base. No problem, little Johnny's parents will take him to his prosthetist for a repair. But the insurance company or government agency balk at covering the repair. The prosthesis was not being used as intended. This is abuse and is not covered. Alternatively, they deny coverage claiming the prosthesis must have been faulty. The result is that little Johnny's potential, his ability to compete and socialize with his peers, and his self-esteem are all now limited. At this point, little Johnny realizes that his own future expectations are diminished. In practice, I, and most of my peers, would congratulate little Johnny on his achievement, fix the prosthesis and wish him well in the next game regardless of payment. But that's not at issue. What is at issue is that we know we can do better, and that little Johnny does not need to

have his potential and his future limited due to limb loss. The same is true for the 45-year-old who wades in creeks and rivers fishing, or the septuagenarian who wants to keep riding a bike after amputation. This can all be possible, with all activities leading to better health and well-being. What is often ignored by policy makers, all leading to lower future medical costs.

Marylanders need this legislation. O&P providers in Maryland provide devices and care that allow patients to return to work and contribute to their communities. These devices allow children to play sports with their peers and live active, healthy lives. We have seen the artificial limitations imposed upon our patients simply due to a lack of access to these activity-specific devices. Our patients need this legislation. It is for the reasons stated above that we urge you to support HB0865.

Thank you for your consideration and your support,

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