

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 Prostheses

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 group of health care providers who work closely with orthotic and prosthetic patients, **including physicians, physician assistants, physical therapists, and occupational therapists**. As medical professionals, we are acutely aware of the challenges that our patients face. Without the right devices, we are unable to help patients progress in their rehabilitation journey beyond a certain point. No amount of appointments, prescriptions or physical/occupational therapy alone can help a patient participate in sports and exercise if the device is not appropriate. All of our services are complementary to the provision of the appropriate prosthetic or orthotic device. Below is a collection of testimony from a variety of medical professionals who ask for your support of HB0865:

- Physical activity is a basic need and right. Each week adults need 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity and 2 days of muscle strengthening activity, according to the current Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. This has been reinforced by countless studies. Denying coverage for activity-specific orthoses is condemning people to a lifetime of poor health and ailments, because they cannot achieve the medically recommended amount of exercise with a standard orthosis. I am certain this coverage will reduce long term costs by helping people improve their health both physically and mentally!
- Preparing O&P users for job and sport specific activities makes the user more engaged in their goals, motivated to participate in PT, less likely to be injured, and less likely to need PT or other medical services in the future.
- It is necessary to encourage increased movement for better health. This should include folks with limb loss, not exclude.
- The ability to move your body for joyful physical activity is absolutely vital for our health and wellbeing.
- Would allow patients to have better quality of life and allow for specialized training

- By providing a return to functional mobility, it allows more than walking from point A to point B, but rather enables one to pursue dreams, jobs, and engagement in the community that might otherwise be limited. It's enabling people to give back.
- Patients with a wide range of neurologic and chronic conditions require additional assistive O&P devices for completion of every day activities and to be able to participate in society. Devices that promote upper extremity function/support, weight-bearing activities beyond walking, and reduced spasticity/rigidity are essential.
- Our patients need access to activity specific orthoses and prostheses in a timely and affordable manner in order to walk, transfer, and function without limping or causing more pain and issues as well as the ability to be independent.
- Regular, pain free, physical activity is important to maintain general health, improving diabetes and other metabolic disorders, avoiding depression, and promoting longevity
- Working in the field of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, we see often that our patients require these devices in order to successfully complete their basic activities of daily living. These would often not be possible for patient's due to a cost limiting factor.
- ACSM and international physical activity guidelines are not only for abled bodied, we need to include and improve access for people of all activity levels to have the chance to be active and healthy
- I work in rehabilitation. I see great disparity in patients' ability to access prosthetics. Those who have coverage and access are able to work and live with maximum independence. Those who are not able to access this resource are not able to live to their true potential. We can and must do better.
- It would help those with limb loss engage in activities that promote wellness and a healthy lifestyle, which in turn will help control their medical conditions such as diabetes and hypertension.
- Hand and upper extremity prosthetics also need coverage to allow patients to return to work.
- Mental health is so important. These patients need to be out, moving around, enjoying life in order to recover to their most optimal point
- Activity-specific orthoses and prostheses will allow patients to achieve their full potential and return to recreational or community level activities they were participating in prior to the event requiring the use of an orthoses or prostheses.

- I've worked with children and adults with spinal cord injuries for over 10 years, and have seen first-hand the importance of return to sport and extra-curricular activities for my patients. Having orthoses and prosthetics that provide increased independence to play with their peers and return to physical activity can make a huge impact on someone's life and allows for more inclusivity within the community.
- My patients would benefit from less restrictions to allow for them to achieve their goals that are not just to walk. They deserve better.
- The goal of orthotic devices in conjunction with physical rehab is to help patients return to their full prior level of function and to lead full lives. Quality of life includes tasks behind just being home bound and walking household distances. It includes doing leisure tasks and social activities in community, which are essential to a full and happy life. Orthotics are a key component to this. Think about what is a meaningful task to you in your life? Afford a patient with a disability the same ability to participate in meaningful tasks to them by approving this bill.
- It is so important for our patients to keep their joints in optimal positions and alignment so that they can increase their independence with basic ADL tasks. It also helps them stay more independent in the community, work, school, and leisure tasks.
- As a physical therapist working with children with limb differences and amputation, this bill would enable my patients to be so much more active in their homes, schools, and communities. The children I work with would be able to participate in age-appropriate activities such as swimming, bike riding, playing musical instruments, playing sports, and much more! Participation is what enables kids to be kids - to play and engage with other children is an incredibly important part of their development. This bill would offer so much to their lives!
- As a pediatric PT, I have seen first hand the impact of orthotics and prosthetics on children. Having access to the appropriate equipment is key not only for kid's physical well being, but their emotional well being as well. Being able to participate in physical activity with their peers is key for a child's social and emotional development.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children and adolescents engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily. The recommendation for adults is 150 minutes weekly. The majority of people do not meet these guidelines despite numerous proven health benefits of exercise. Persons living with limb differences are at increased risk for cardiovascular disease, and cardiovascular diseases also decrease mobility in those who utilize lower limb prosthetic limbs. It is absolutely critical for the health and wellbeing of persons living with limb differences that access to required prostheses not remain a barrier to participation in exercise. I am a physical medicine and rehabilitation physician.
- Community participation in physical activity is critical to optimize well being , health, and socialization with typical peers.

- It would allow my patients to be more active and get involved in activities they enjoy. It would also increase their social outlets and chances to interact with other similar-aged people.
- Passing this bill will allow my patient population across Maryland access to devices for a healthy lifestyle. All too often my patients lament after an amputation the difficulty in remaining active due to standard fabricated materials used in prosthesis and orthotics. This leads to patients avoiding activities which negatively affects their physical, emotional, and social health. We are fortunate to have a state that places an emphasis on parks and recreation. To see patients unable to get back to hiking or playing pickleball after an amputation when their tax dollars support these facilities is disheartening. I am urging you to consider the welfare of these individuals in our state.

When our patients do not have access to appropriate devices to allow them to engage in sports, recreation, and activities beyond walking, our therapies and interventions are limited in their effectiveness to help patients do these activities. We need the full coordination of appropriate services and devices to help our patients succeed. 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,

Representatives from:

The Johns Hopkins Hospital
Johns Hopkins University
Johns Hopkins Home Health Services
Johns Hopkins School of Medicine
Johns Hopkins Howard County Medical Center
MovementX
Sinai Hospital
St. George's University School of Medicine
Medstar Physical Therapy
Medstar Health
Foot and Ankle Pain Center
UM Rehabilitation & Ortho Institute
Kennedy Krieger Institute
BCPS
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Meredith Drake, PT
Stephanie Williams, PT, DPT
Lisa Levitt , DPT
Barbara Jane DeLateur, MD MS
Laura Cardarelli, DPT
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