

Written Testimony of

**Peter W. Thomas, J.D.**

A Maryland Resident on behalf of the  
National Association for the Advancement of Orthotics and Prosthetics (NAAOP)

Before the Maryland General Assembly  
Committee on Health and Government Operations

On House Bill 383  
Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance - Coverage for  
Orthoses (So Every BODY Can Move Act)

Peter W. Thomas, J.D.  
Managing Partner  
Powers Law Firm  
1501 M Street, NW, Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20005  
Residence:  
3903 Thornapple Street  
Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815  
[Peter.Thomas@powerslaw.com](mailto:Peter.Thomas@powerslaw.com)  
[\(202\) 466-6550](tel:(202)466-6550)

Chairman Pena-Melnyk and Vice Chair Cullison:

I write in strong support of House Bill 383, the “So Every BODY Can Move” legislation to ensure patient access to custom orthotic braces of the arms, legs, back and neck for people with orthopedic injuries and disabilities. This important legislation compliments the bill enacted last year on prosthetic limb coverage, a set of benefits designed to address the medical and functional needs of individuals with limb loss. H.B. 383 would clarify coverage under both Medicaid and state regulated private insurance in Maryland of custom orthotic braces, components of orthoses, and repairs and replacement of orthoses designed to enable an individual to complete activities of daily living—such as walking or manipulating objects—performing essential job-related activities, or performing physical activities including running, biking, swimming, strength training, and other activities to maximize lower and upper limb function.

I am a bilateral amputee who has used prosthetic limbs since 1974 when I lost my legs in a car accident. I have used orthotic braces to augment my use of prosthetic limbs when performing robust physical activity to remain healthy and fit through the past fifty years of prosthetic use. I also serve as General Counsel to the National Association for the Advancement of Orthotics and Prosthetics (NAAOP), a national nonprofit association of orthotic and prosthetic practitioners who serve those with limb loss and limb difference. This bill, H.B. 383, would enable enhanced access to critical custom orthotic care that would not only enable a person with a disabling condition to walk or perform upper limb functions, but would also cover activity-specific custom orthoses to allow that same person to engage in physical activities to remain functional, fit, and healthy. This stands to save significant dollars in the long term by reducing the long-term consequences of immobility and a sedentary lifestyle.

Coverage of orthoses in the bill is confined to “custom” orthoses. This distinguishes this requirement from covering off-the-shelf or pre-fabricated orthoses which are much more common than activity-specific devices. This restricts this coverage requirement to individuals who truly need a custom orthosis to perform physical activities and this should help limit the cost of this provision. An example of a custom orthosis required to perform physical activity would be a specialized knee brace or custom knee-ankle-foot-orthosis to increase strength in a weak or malformed limb while performing rigorous physical activity. This also contributes to the safety of the individual while performing these activities.

NAAOP, and I personally, strongly support H.B. 383 and urge the committee and the Maryland Assembly to expeditiously pass this bill and see it enacted into law in the coming months. Thank you for your consideration of my views.