

Date: 01/28/2025

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

Reference: HB0383- Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance- Coverage for Orthoses (So Every Body Can Move Act)

Position: Support/Favorable

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk, and Committee Members:

We are grateful for the opportunity to share our comments on House Bill 383 and to encourage your support for this piece of legislation. We are a group of individuals who work with individuals who require custom orthoses. Many of us work at orthotic & prosthetic companies (clinics) that serve patient across the state of Maryland, while some of us are physical/occupational therapists or adaptive sports professionals. We all interface with patients with a wide range of diagnoses who require orthoses as clinicians/therapists who directly serve our patients, technicians who fabricate their unique custom orthotic devices, or administrators who keep our offices running smoothly. Every day, we work alongside our patients in their hardships and struggles to reach their goals. 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.

This bill is an expansion of coverage of last session's HB 865, which requires coverage for medically necessary prostheses for physical activity. Below is a collection of testimony from a variety of individuals who ask for your support of HB 383:

I treat many mostly pediatric patients who live and play in Maryland. I have treated patients who have expressed desire and difficulty participating in recreational activities with friends and family including but not limited to kayaking, running, archery, and soccer. Activity specific orthoses which would facilitate their participation in recreational activities enhances their ability bond with their peers/family members, explore interests and enrich their lives.

Orthoses are integral part of providing patients the ability to ambulate, which provides physical wellness, mobility, and a return to an improved quality of life.

Helping our patients participate in life activities will improve not only the patient's quality of life, but the life they have with their family and friends.

Access to activity specific devices would give patients the ability to live a normal life and have better peer engagement, as well as improved health due to the ability to participate in more activities.

Being able to leave the house and join friends on cruises and other activities we participated in before.

All patients should have the ability to live their lives to their fullest potential, and having an activity specific orthosis or prosthesis helps them to do just that!

Tailoring a device to fit all of a patient's needs is next to impossible, which is why we focus on the most common activities of daily living for a patient's brace. Allowing patients to utilize different technology for specific tasks will increase the ways our patients can interact with the world around them, impacting patient outcomes and their quality of life in a positive way.

There are many patients that suffer from conditions that require a special inserts or shoes or special orthotics that help their quality of life.

We do not use the same pair of shoes every day. We have different shoes for different reasons - golf shoes, dress shoes, running shoes, walking shoes, winter boots. Orthoses should not be treated differently. Our ability to have activity specific orthoses enables patients to return to a life closer to what they had prior to injury, trauma, or neurological incident. Activity specific orthoses are instrumental in enabling our patients to maintain a high quality of life. Thank you for your consideration in this important bill that will benefit so many in need of your help.

The patient will greatly benefit from having orthotics, as they can help improve their overall comfort and stability. This will not only enhance their performance in daily activities but also support them in performing better at work, making tasks easier and more efficient.

We would love for this bill to pass it would greatly impact and improve our patients lives to their fullest potential.

Access to activity specific orthoses would allow my patients to pursue their personal and professional goals without limitation due to mobility or pain like exploring parks and beaches, playing sports, or walking on terrain that requires a different orthotic design compared to their day to day life.

It is essential for patients that require orthotics to ambulate have a separate orthotic for activity or sport as many orthotics would not hold up to activity or need to have special modifications in order to participate. This would be life changing for so many patients!

Orthoses designed for standing and walking are totally different in construction due to needs for impact, moisture protection, weight limits, etc. However, they may end up being coded and billed for in a similar manner. I have many patients who participate in activities like

weight-lifting, adaptive power lifting and cross fit, wheelchair basketball and handcycling, wheelchair fencing, adaptive sailing, among other activities. They are required to use their every day orthoses in environments that could cause damage to their devices. Many orthoses are not designed for activities like deep squats or jumping, and using inappropriate orthoses for these activities could lead to patient injury and/or pre-mature breakage of the device. Movement is a necessary right, not a luxury.

I support this bill and effort because I get to witness as an O&P Administrative employee how we are changing the dynamics of our patients lives. I have a much better understanding of the great benefits that would come with this to aid many patients across our state. I have witnessed how the O&P industry is helping families and communities at large across our state. "So Everybody Can Move" is a great and essential connection to healthier living and a better quality of lives that would be very beneficial to the patients.

Access to activity-specific orthotic devices will enable patients affected by limb differences to lead healthier and more engaged lives. Ensuring there is an insurance benefit for these types of devices will afford O&P clinicians the opportunity to provide equitable care to patients of all ages.

Special use orthoses are an essential part of living a healthy life for those who require them. It is not a luxury or a convenience to be able to participate in exercise and sports and special activities. Coverage of special use orthoses is a bargain if, as we know from extensive clinical experience and research, the function made possible by a proper supportive orthosis allows for maintaining an active lifestyle which prevents illness and improves quality of life. The return on investment is clear.

I have seen several patients who would benefit from engaging in physical activities with an activity-specific orthosis, but are unable due to costs and lack of insurance coverage. All patients, ranging from children to adults deserve to do what makes them happy. Engaging in physical activity and returning to activities they once enjoyed improves mental health and well-being.

Many patients need specialized orthoses to have access to the beach/ocean, pool, boat, kayak, etc. Orthoses that have metal parts cannot be used in the pool or ocean as they will corrode, seize, or break. Sometimes the best orthosis for someone to use for daily walking is not the right orthosis for transferring, running, or jumping during cross-fit. Sometimes the orthosis that fits well into your shoes for daily activities is no safe to use with for water based activities, such as getting from the locker room to the pool, getting in/out of the ocean/pool/lake, or taking a shower/bath when traveling without a shower chair. Being able to provide orthotic devices 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, opening new opportunities, and improving the physical and mental well-being.

As an O&P technician who fabricates the devices for the patients, I can see the impact it can have on the patients across Maryland having a second device for different activities. Fabrication material and components can widely vary on what the device will be primarily used for.

By allowing patients to have a secondary device to meet specific needs, you are ensuring they have access to live full lives. A single device for everyday use is not always appropriate for other lifestyle activities that may include high impact or water submersion, for instance. A secondary device for those who would qualify can provide a true physical and psychological benefit to help restore their maximum function.

This bill will allow improved access to activities that will increase quality of life. Individuals who require orthotics will be able to engage in physical activities beyond just walking. Research shows that exercise and physical activity is a strong predictor of future health complications, especially in populations already at high risk for morbidity and mortality.

Individuals need to have flexibility of movement to allow them to respond to various environmental demands and increased their activity level to maintain appropriate health and reduce risk of further health challenges.

Additional orthoses will allow for greater independence in the community while promoting improved quality of life.

Marylanders need this legislation; last session you passed HB 865, providing coverage for activity-specific prostheses. 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 and adults 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 HB0383.

Thank you for your consideration and your support,

Representatives from:

Dankmeyer, Inc.
Hanger, Inc.
Lifebridge Health
Medstar Health
Move United

Adrienne Castle
Jonas Ljung, CPO, MSPO
Susan Dumler, OTR/L, CHT

Leah Meunier, MSPO, CPO
Natalya Beranek, CPO, MSPO
Richard Krosin, CPO
Karen Curtis
Holly Hendrix, CPO
Judith Taylor
Sandra Barber
Shawnda Carr
Benjamin Douty
Stephanie Mills, MA OA
Zury Majano
Benjamin Higgs, CPO, Area Clinic Manager
Melinda Stapleton, OA
Maira Arias
Channon Skarson
Talaya L. Wilson
Anita Law
Molly Luckinbill
Claire Vallery, CPO, MSPO
Kayleigh McCuley-Sayer, Ed.D.
Tracy Shaw, CO, BOCP
Cole Branche, MSPO, CPO
Abigail Iacangelo
Rochelle Groves, CPO
Jami Biven OA
Jeremy Halteman, CPO
Karen Randall
Rebecca Russell
Kristin Boswell
Angela Alvaro
Mark S. Hopkins, PT, CPO
Victoria Hall
Rebecca Frost, CPO, MSPO
Lukas Baner, CTPO
Laura Gold
Rhianna Lapen, PT, DPT
Brittany J Eagles
Emily Soriano, PT, MSPT
Angie Bryl, CPO
Brianna M. Kwon, PT, DPT, NCS
Shannon Doran, PT, DPT
Dr. Kaitlin Boushell