

Good morning. I am submitting my testimony in support of HB935.

My name is Jennifer Rheeling, and I have been an athletic trainer in the secondary school setting and a Prince George's County resident since 1991. I was a full-time athletic trainer for the District of Columbia Public Schools from 1991 to 2023. I retired from DCPS and am now the first full-time athletic trainer for KIPP DC: Public Charter Schools. Secondary school student-athlete health and safety is my passion and expertise. I am a member of The Jordan McNair Foundation and The Korey Stringer Institute medical advisory boards, the chair of the District of Columbia State Athletic Association Sports Medicine Advisory Board, immediate past chair of the National Athletic Trainers' Association Secondary School Athletic Trainers' Committee and have served on the National Federation of High Schools' Sports Medicine Advisory Board.

The benefits of athletic participation are well-established and documented. The role of athletic trainers is to safeguard the participants and provide comprehensive athletic health care services in the event of injury. This allows for our students to benefit fully from their athletic participation.

The following information is taken from the Board of Certification, Inc. website [BOC, Inc.](#), the credentialing oversight agency for athletic trainers.

Athletic Trainer Definition

Athletic Trainers (ATs) are health care professionals who render service or treatment, under the direction of or in collaboration with a physician, in accordance with their education and training and the states' statutes, rules and regulations. As a part of the health care team, services provided by ATs include injury and illness prevention, wellness promotion and education, emergent care, examination and clinical diagnosis, therapeutic intervention, and rehabilitation of injuries and medical conditions. *Athletic training is recognized by the American Medical Association (AMA) as a health care profession.

**This definition is approved by the Inter-Agency Terminology Work Group and the Athletic Trainer Strategic Alliance, January 2017.*

Becoming an AT

Athletic training is an academic major or graduate equivalent major program that is accredited by the [Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education](#) (CAATE). Educational programs to become an AT are at the master's level where students learn in medical-based models through hands-on learning and clinical experiences, as well as lectures and demonstrations. After finishing the degree, the student must pass a board exam through the

Board of Certification (BOC) to practice in most states. ATs can go on to earn specializations or even a Doctorate in Athletic Training.

Practice Domains for ATs

The [BOC Practice Analysis](#) identifies essential knowledge and skills for the athletic training profession and serves as a blueprint for exam development and continuing competence programming. The current Practice Analysis, 8th Edition (PA8) is PA8 is effective for BOC exams beginning March/April 2023 and continuing education beginning January 1, 2024.

- Risk Reduction, Wellness and Health Literacy
- Assessment, Evaluation and Diagnosis
- Critical Incident Management
- Therapeutic Intervention
- Health Care Administration and Professional Responsibility

Athletic trainers provide value far beyond standing on the sidelines of athletic contests. Most of our work is done prior to the start of any athletic activity. One of the cornerstones of risk and liability mitigation is the development of thorough sport and venue-specific emergency action plans. The coordination of stakeholders available during an emergency response should be planned, written, practiced and reviewed frequently. It is the process of developing and practicing the EAP that identifies barriers and allows for troubleshooting. Practicing the EAP allows for each stakeholder to become proficient in expected responses and delineate roles and expectations. This allows for a fluid response and helps minimize errors.

Athletic trainers assemble necessary emergency response supplies and equipment, supervise their care and maintenance, ensure their availability, and train stakeholders in appropriate use. Having cold water immersion needs or an automated electronic defibrillator doesn't ensure they are immediately available or used as intended. Indeed, in the death of sixteen-year-old Matthew Mangine during a soccer practice, "At the time of Mangine's collapse, the athletic trainer supplied by St. Elizabeth Healthcare was on the other side of the campus at another soccer practice, and the coach at the scene didn't have the keys needed to retrieve the nearest AED." [Settlement reached in wrongful death case of teen who died during soccer practice](#). A full-time athletic trainer would have identified this issue and worked with administrators to eliminate the barriers to access.

Having an athletic trainer present at football games is a strong start. We can be the difference between life and death, or the difference between full recovery and catastrophic outcomes.

Having a medical professional on-site during all athletic activities is the gold standard. Our children deserve nothing less.

I wish whole-heartedly I could be in person to testify, however I am provided athletic training services for the DC State Athletic Association's Indoor Track Championship Meet. Please make the commitment to safeguard our most precious human commodity – our future leaders. Start with football games, end with full-time athletic trainers at every school with athletics.

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