

Zee APTA MD Fair copay bill testimony:

Good afternoon Madam chair and members of the committee. My name is Zeeshan Bhimani and I have been a Physical Therapist for 11 years working in different settings ranging from out patient, skilled nursing and home health. Currently I work as a home health PT in Montgomery county. I am also the Director of Reimbursement for APTA Maryland. I am here to urge a favorable report on SB 699.

Physical Therapy is a cumulative process . We work in conjunction with the biological healing process, which requires multiple visits over time to be effective. Due to the current co-pay system a 60-80\$ copay per visit cumulatively leads to an out of pocket barrier of approximately 600\$ per month for the patient. When the patient can't afford the dosage of the therapy they end up skipping visits and/or often stop treatment completely.

For instance, I had a patient who came to our clinic with complaints of low back pain, he received a few sessions of therapy but abruptly stopped, stating that his back pain was better and the high co-pays made it unaffordable for him to complete the recommended dosage. After a few months that patient came back, mentioning that he aggravated his pain again for which he had to go to the emergency room , get imaging and finally got a spinal injection which helped him with pain for a few months but had started wearing off. His Orthopedic recommended to continue managing the pain with Physical therapy. All this could have been avoided if the patient would have continued the recommended dosage and would have had a better outcome. Studies show that PT management gives a net cost benefit of \$4,160 for acute low back pain.

This Fair co-pay bill will not only help lowering the fee, but will also help patients choose a path which is replacing expensive surgeries and injections with proven conservative care.