

Thursday January 19, 2023
Senate Transportation Committee
SB 2191

Chairman Clemens and Committee Members

My name is Catherine Staloch. I am testifying on behalf of the American Physical Therapy Association North Dakota (APTA ND) Chapter, which I am a member of. I am a practicing physical therapist (PT) who graduated with her Doctorate in Physical Therapy from the University of North Dakota in 2006. I have practiced in North Dakota for 16 years in various settings working with geriatric and neurologic patient populations. I currently teach at the University of Mary in the physical therapy program. I am asking for your support of SB 2191 to add physical therapists as qualified professionals who can issue special identifying certificates to individuals with mobility impairments.

Physical therapists are considered mobility experts and have undergone extensive training in evaluating mobility across the lifespan. Training includes assessment of gait, transfers, strength, range of motion, balance, and cardiopulmonary fitness, all of which impact an individual's mobility status and function. Furthermore, physical therapists work with individuals with mobility impairments in all practice settings and with diverse diagnoses and needs, such as following a surgical procedure, and chronic conditions, such as Parkinson's disease.

Adding physical therapists as qualified providers will streamline and improve patient experiences in urban and rural North Dakota. North Dakota has direct access, allowing patients to receive physical therapy services without seeing their medical provider (medical doctor, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant) first. Often patients with mobility impairments will see a physical therapist without their primary care provider having first-hand knowledge of their current condition. During my time in clinical practice, I had numerous patients ask if I could assist them in obtaining a special identifying certificate. Unfortunately, I could not and had to refer them to another provider who could provide this service. Furthermore, I have had physicians, and other providers reach out to me for my knowledge of the patient's mobility status when completing the application or considering the patient's need for the certificate. Reducing the burden of other health care providers will be another essential improvement with the addition of physical therapists, reducing time and improving efficiencies of services, thereby reducing the overall cost of care and services.

APTA ND, representing physical therapists across the state who provide services to individuals with mobility impairments, respectfully requests your DO PASS on SB 2191.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions, I would be happy to try to answer them.

Sincerely,
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