

My name is Eldon Johnson, and I have been a physical therapist in ND since 1995, which means that I am a "seasoned veteran," or "old," as I've been told! In the field of physical therapy, I have pretty much been there, done that, and seen it all. I currently am a partner and owner in RehabAuthority Physical Therapy, based out of Fargo, ND. Thank you for allowing me to provide my written testimony in support of physical therapists being added as "health care provider" in subsection 21 of section 65-01-02 of the ND Century Code.

This has been a long time coming, and I am thrilled that this amendment is being considered today. Physical therapists are some of the most highly educated, trained, and skillful practitioners in the medical community, and are musculoskeletal experts. We are excellent gatekeepers in the medical system for these patients. In instances when we must rely on referrals from other medical providers, patients are often referred to us far too late, or not at all. We need to make it easier for all North Dakotans to access physical therapy care, without putting unnecessary barriers in the way.

There are a number of important benefits that will result from designating physical therapists as health care providers in the ND Century Code. There are numerous recent scientific studies that show the significant benefit of early access to physical therapy for patients. Some of these benefits include improved patient functional outcomes, increased patient satisfaction, significantly decreased overall healthcare costs, decreased use and reliance on excessive imaging or laboratory tests, decreased use of often-unnecessary injections and surgeries, decreased lost work days, and decreased dependence on medications—especially opioids. I honestly cannot think of one negative ramification or circumstance of passing this bill.

I implore you to vote in support of Senate Bill 2148. Thank you very much.

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