

TESTIMONY OF SUSAN MOREY, MEd/PT
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EASTERN DIVISION OF HCR MANOR CARE
ON THE BEHALF OF THE PENNSYLVANIA HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATION
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE
JULY 30, 2007

Introduction

Chairman Sturla, Chairman Adolph and members of the Committee on Professional Licensure I appreciate the opportunity to testify during this public hearing on House Bill 1199. The issue of allowing the Physical Therapist Assistant (“PTA”) to practice with the direct on-premises supervision and the indirect supervision of the Physical Therapist (“PT”) is very important and if passed would have a positive impact within the health services industry and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

I am testifying on the behalf of the Pennsylvania Health Care Association and the Center for Assisted Living Management which represents approximately 300 long-term care and senior service providers across the Commonwealth.

I am a practicing physical therapist with over 30 years of experience. I have served as the Vice Chair on the Pennsylvania Physical Therapist Board of Examiners for a full 4 year term. I declined the Commissioner’s request to serve another term for personal reasons. I have experience in home health, hospice, pediatrics, hospitals, independent living facilities and skilled nursing facilities.

Currently, I am the Vice President of and General Manager for the Eastern Division of HCR Manor Care. Manor Care is a leading provider of short-term post –acute medical care and rehabilitation and long-term skilled nursing care. We currently operate more than 275 skilled nursing centers of which 46 are in Pennsylvania. In addition I oversee three assisted living facilities in the Commonwealth. We provide hospice services and home health care. Manor Care also operates outpatient therapy clinics that provide rehab services at work sites, schools, assisted living centers, homes, hospitals and other off-site locations.

Given the depth of my professional experience, I can confidently state that the expansion of the current law to allow PTAs to practice with not only direct on-premises, but also indirect PT supervision would enhance access to care and would not endanger those receiving the care.

Practical Experience and Legislative Trend

The PTA is a well trained responsible professional. The registration requirements of a PTA with the Pennsylvania State Board of Physical Therapy mandates successful graduation from a physical therapist assistant program approved by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education and passing an exam.

House Bill 1199 does not permit full autonomy of the PTA from the PT. Consequently, the PTA is not practicing as a PT but is allowed to use the fullest extent of his or her educational and practical wisdom and judgment.

The supervisory structure presented in House Bill 1199 is not foreign to the Commonwealth and is reflective of the present trend toward the expansion of the scope of practice of mid-level health care providers. As I know you are aware, during this past budget season, the Commonwealth did in fact expand the scope of practice of several mid-level healthcare providers: dental hygienists, certified registered nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists and nurse midwives. Again none of the previously mentioned professionals are completely autonomous of the over site of the respective supervising professional.

The expansion of the scope of practice of the PTA further permits and ensures that the appropriate care follow the patient in the most efficient manner. The passage of this legislation would allow nursing care facilities, home health centers and the newly created assisted living facilities to service their patients at a greater level of efficiency while maintaining a high level of quality. Presently, in Pennsylvania, only a PT can administer any level of care in these previously mentioned environments even though a PTA is fully qualified to administer effective day to day treatment without the physical presence of a PT.

Model Practice Act

The Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy Model Practice Act is considered the *“preeminent standard and most effective tool available for revising and modernizing physical therapy practice acts”*.¹ Within the standards of the Model Practice Act, PTA's are not restricted to practicing only under the direct supervision of a PT.

Under Article 4 “Regulation of Physical Therapy” the section on “Patient Care Management” requires that the PT determine the use of PTAs ... so as to provide care that is “safe, effective and efficient”.² The Model Practice Act does not state that the PTA work exclusively under direct on-site supervision. Clearly had that been the intent of the Act then it would be so stated as in the case of other support staff to the PT.

¹ Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy, The Model Practice Act for Physical Therapy, 4th ed., revised 2006, July 20, 2007 <http://www.fsbpt.org/standards/index.asp>.

² Id.

The relationship between the PT and the PTA as typified by the Model Practice Act has been adopted by most of the states in the country with the exception of Hawaii, Mississippi, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia.

Potential Economic Impact

According to the National Institutes of Health Office of Science Education the occupation of PTs and PTAs is “expected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations through the year 2014”.³

Clearly, the ability for more PTAs to practice within Pennsylvania beyond what a PT can physically supervise would have a positive economic impact on the state. The projections indicate that the future expansion of this field could generate employment opportunities and revenue for the Commonwealth.

Conclusion

From my perspective and years of experience, the Commonwealth can only benefit from the passage of House Bill 1199. In as much as the expansion of practice has been proven to be successful in other states would tend to indicate that Pennsylvania would benefit from moving in this direction as well.

It is my sincere hope that the General Assembly sees fit to pass this legislation and ultimately make it law.

Thank you for your time and attention. I will be more than happy to answer any questions regarding these statements as to the potential value of the legislation to the Commonwealth.

³ United States, National Institutes of Health Office of Science Education, [LifeWorks](http://science.education.nih.gov/LifeWorks.nsf/Alphabetical+List/Physical+Therapist+Assistant?OpenDocument&showTab=5&), July 12, 2007, <http://science.education.nih.gov/LifeWorks.nsf/Alphabetical+List/Physical+Therapist+Assistant?OpenDocument&showTab=5&>. See also, United States, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2006-07 Edition, Physical Therapist Assistants and Aides, July 10, 2007, <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos167.htm>.