



## **Letter in Support of SB 1547-A**

### **House Health Care Committee**

**February 21, 2018**

The Oregon Physical Therapy Association and its more than 1,500 member physical therapists, physical therapy assistants and students of physical therapy, submit this letter in support of SB 1547-A, which expands the list of health care providers, to include physical therapists (among others), who can provide a medical release to an athlete suspected of having a concussion.

Physical therapists are health care professionals who help individuals maintain, restore, and improve movement, activity, and functioning, thereby enabling optimal performance and enhancing health, well-being, and quality of life. Their services prevent, minimize, or eliminate impairments of body functions and structures, activity limitations, and participation restrictions.

Physical therapists have extensive experience treating head trauma and concussion resulting from motor vehicle accidents, falls and sports injuries. Physical therapists are educated in vestibular/balance and orthopedic and physiologic symptoms and progressions to help someone recover from a head trauma and concussion. Currently, physical therapists evaluate, assess and treat patients with head trauma and concussion to help return them to full functional status. Patients in Oregon have had direct access to physical therapists since 1993 and the profession's ability to perform differential diagnosis has been well established.

To become a physical therapist today, one must obtain a Doctorate of Physical Therapy. A minimum required skill set for all entry level graduates is required by the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) accrediting body and is listed in detail on the APTA webpage: [http://www.apta.org/uploadedFiles/APTAorg/About\\_Us/Policies/BOD/Education/MinReqSkillsPTGrad.pdf](http://www.apta.org/uploadedFiles/APTAorg/About_Us/Policies/BOD/Education/MinReqSkillsPTGrad.pdf). Skills considered essential for any physical therapist include those addressing all

systems (i.e. musculoskeletal, neurological, cardiovascular pulmonary, integumentary, GI, and GU) and the continuum of patient care throughout the lifespan. The skills for entry level graduates require they be able to properly screen, examine, evaluate, diagnose, provide prognosis and interventions, educate, and develop an appropriate plan of care addressing all systems mentioned above. The breadth of knowledge encompassed in this curriculum establishes physical therapists as experts with the requisite education to provide exceptional patient care with respect to concussion management, diagnosis, treatment, and return to play decisions.

Physical therapists often see and treat a patient with a concussion multiple times a week, which allows them to assess their symptoms more consistently and throughout their care and progression through the return to play protocol. Seeking certification to returning athletes to play would be a sub- specialty of the profession that most physical therapists would not be interested in obtaining. However, for those who do treat athletes with concussions, the physical therapist who sees and treats that athlete would be able to clear him/her to play at the appropriate time without an unnecessary visit to a doctor, where the doctor then asks the physical therapist who has been treating the patient if he/she is ready to be returned to play.

Return to play decisions are made only after an athlete can demonstrate and pass a graded protocol that is based on symptoms and findings from specific testing. No athlete will be able to return to play without meeting the standards in the protocols.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Murphy, PT

Chair, Government Affairs Committee

Oregon Physical Therapy Association