

Submitter: Angelina Ciavarella
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3824

Dear Chairs,

My name is Angelina Ciavarella and I am a physical therapist in Oregon. I am writing to ask for your support in passing House Bill 3824, the PT Modernization Act.

Physical therapists with doctoral degrees (DPTs) are uniquely qualified to prescribe durable medical equipment due to their specialized education and training. We complete extensive coursework in biomechanics, gait analysis, and assistive technology assessment that is both comprehensive and highly skilled. Our expertise in functional mobility and comprehensive understanding of activity limitations makes them ideal professionals to determine appropriate DME needs.

I specialize in neurologic physical therapy, and provide recommendations on DME frequently. This currently requires contacting the patient's physician, specifying what DME is required, and waiting for the physician to have time to enter the script for the DME. This leads to delays in the patient receiving the necessary equipment, as well as unnecessary overload for the physician. Allowing qualified PTs to directly order DME would expedite patient care while allowing physicians to focus on more complex medical issues that require their specific expertise.

Physical therapists receive rigorous training in musculoskeletal assessment and specific evidence-based clinical decision rules that guide imaging decisions. We routinely apply protocols like the Ottawa Ankle Rules and Canadian C-Spine Rules—the same guidelines we use in primary care—to determine when imaging is warranted. Their doctoral education includes substantial training in recognizing red flags and understanding imaging appropriateness criteria.

Lastly, I urge you to bring Oregon in line with 46 other states and the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy to make the practice of dry needling by a certified and licensed physical therapist legal in the state for the following reasons: Dry needling has been safely practiced by physical therapists since the 1990s with extremely low adverse event rates (less than 0.1% according to multiple large-scale studies), and PT liability insurers report no increased claims related to this practice. Physical therapists receive comprehensive doctoral-level anatomical training, with the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy confirming that 88% of competencies required for safe dry needling are already included in accredited DPT curricula. Multiple Supreme Courts in other states have affirmed that dry needling is distinct from acupuncture and properly within physical therapy scope, recognizing that health professions naturally have overlapping practices that benefit patient choice.

In our current healthcare climate where Oregonians struggle with access to care, allowing qualified physical therapists to perform dry needling would increase availability of this evidence-based intervention that has been incorporated into clinical practice guidelines.

Please support in passing House Bill 3824. Thank you,
Angelina Ciavarella, PT