

April 18, 2019

The Honorable Jeanie Riddle
Chair
Committee on Professional Regulation
Missouri Senate
201 W. Capitol Avenue, Room 321
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Re: AMA Opposition to Missouri H.B. 410

Dear Chairwoman Riddle:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, I write to express our **opposition** to House Bill (H.B.) 410. This bill would allow physical therapists to treat patients directly without a referral from a physician. The AMA believes physical therapy is a treatment which should only be performed following a medical diagnosis from a physician. Allowing physical therapists to treat patients without a medical diagnosis threatens the health and safety of patients and may delay the diagnosis and treatment of serious medical conditions. This bill, if enacted, would also likely increase utilization of physical therapy services and related health care costs.

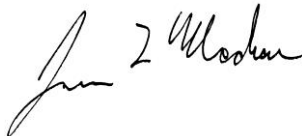
The AMA believes the ordering of medical services and treatments for patients, including physical therapy, is considered the practice of medicine. Allowing physical therapists to treat patients without a physician referral may seem minor and inconsequential—until it is not. Aches and pains that may encourage a patient to seek physical therapy may be symptomatic of a serious, even life-threatening medical condition. Physical therapists do not have the education or training to know the difference—physicians do. Physicians complete more than 12,000 hours of clinical education and training during their four years of medical school and three-to-seven years of residency training. It is through this broad-based education that physicians are trained to provide complex differential diagnoses and develop a treatment plan that may include physical therapy. Physical therapists are educated and trained to provide therapy treatment not to diagnose medical conditions. For these reasons, patients must see a physician before any course of treatment is prescribed, including physical therapy. It is our concern that even a delay in the proper diagnosis and treatment of a patient could prove harmful. It is simply a matter of patient safety.

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Eliminating the referral requirement for physical therapy will also likely increase health care costs due to potential misdiagnosis, delay of proper treatment and overutilization of physical therapy services. In the current era of cost cutting and proper utilization of health care services, allowing direct access to physical therapy is antithetical to this approach. Missouri patients deserve better.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments. For the reasons discussed above, we strongly urge you to oppose H.B. 410. If you have any questions, please contact Kimberly Horvath, JD, Senior Legislative Attorney, AMA Advocacy Resource Center, at kimberly.horvath@ama-assn.org or (312) 464-4783.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jim L Madara".

James L. Madara, MD

cc: Missouri State Medical Association
David O. Barbe, MD, MHA