



GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES
& SPECIAL EDUCATION
Patrick Reinhart, Executive Director
550 W 7th Ave Suite 1220
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Main: 907.269.8990
Toll Free: 1.888.269.8990
Fax: 907.269.8995

March 19, 2026

Honorable Members of the Alaska State Legislature
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: SUPPORT FOR HB 272 - INSURANCE FOR PROSTHETICS & ORTHOTICS

Dear Members of the Alaska State Legislature,

On behalf of the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, I am writing to express strong support for House Bill 272. The Council thanks Representative Josephson for his dedication to this important issue and for introducing this legislation during the 34th Alaska State Legislature on January 23, 2026. HB 272 proposes important updates to Alaska's insurance coverage laws for prosthetic and orthotic devices that will help individuals with developmental disabilities and others obtain the equipment they need to live healthy, active, and independent lives.

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE or the Council) fulfills several federal and state roles, including serving as Alaska's State Council on Developmental Disabilities under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. The Council works to improve the lives of Alaskans with developmental disabilities and promotes a system in which individuals can live meaningful lives in their communities, consistent with AS 47.80.095, the Developmental Disabilities Shared Vision Act. HB 272 supports this vision by addressing barriers that individuals with disabilities face in obtaining prosthetic and orthotic devices necessary for everyday living, work, recreation, and personal care.

Public Health Need

- Approximately **6,500 Alaskans live with limb loss or limb difference.**
- Many face barriers to obtaining prosthetic or orthotic devices for **physical activity, water activities, and personal hygiene.**
- Barriers often include:
 - Insurance denials for devices labeled **"not medically necessary."**
 - **High out-of-pocket costs** ranging from **\$5,000 to more than \$50,000.**
- Without appropriate coverage, individuals and families may be forced to:
 - Pay prohibitive costs for necessary devices.
 - Risk **injury from using improper or worn devices.**

- Live **sedentary lifestyles**, increasing risk for long-term health complications such as obesity.
 - Struggle with **independent personal hygiene** due to lack of appropriate equipment.
- Standard prostheses are designed primarily for **walking and daily mobility** and may not be appropriate for:
 - Running or sports
 - Climbing or physically demanding work
 - Water use or bathing
- Many individuals therefore require **specialized prosthetic or orthotic devices** designed for specific activities.
- Children with disabilities are **4.5 times less likely to participate in physical activity** than children without disabilities.

How HB 272 Helps

- HB 272 updates Alaska’s prosthetic and orthotic coverage law so that **health insurance plans must cover medically necessary prosthetic and orthotic devices**.
- The bill allows individuals to access **additional devices needed for physical activity or hygiene when medically necessary**.
- These updates will help ensure that individuals with limb loss or limb difference can:
 - Maintain **independence**
 - Participate in **work, recreation, and community life**
 - Access equipment needed for **health and personal care**

Fiscal and Social Impact

Research shows that coverage for prosthetic and orthotic devices has **minimal impact on insurance premiums** while producing long-term health and economic benefits.

Key findings include:

- **Secondary joint problems** caused by improper prosthetic use can cost **\$80,000–\$150,000** over a patient’s lifetime.
- One study found that providing **Medicaid prosthetic coverage reduced healthcare costs by \$1,177.60 per patient**.
- The **estimated cost of physical inactivity** is approximately **\$2,500 per person per year**.
- Improper prosthetic use increases risk of **injury and hospitalization**, among the most expensive healthcare costs in Alaska.
- Individuals with disabilities who remain physically active are more likely to:
 - Maintain **employment**
 - Advance in their careers
 - Experience improved **physical and mental health**

Alaskans Who Would Benefit

HB 272 will help ensure that Alaskans with limb loss or limb difference have **fair access to the prosthetic and orthotic devices necessary to participate fully in their communities.** Expanding coverage for medically necessary devices supports health equity, independence, and improved quality of life for individuals with disabilities across Alaska.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation and for your continued commitment to improving the lives of Alaskans with disabilities.

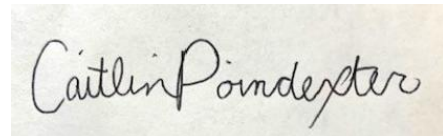
Sincerely,



Sabrina Richmond, GCSDE Chair



Patrick Reinhart
GCDSE Executive Director



Caitlin Poindexter
GCDSE Legislative Committee Co-Chair



Art Delaune
GCDSE Legislative Committee Co-Chair



February 19, 2026

Representative Andy Josephson
Co-Chair
House Finance Committee
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801

RE: APTA ALASKA SUPPORT FOR HB 272 - Activity-Specific Prostheses and Orthoses

Dear Members of the Alaska State Legislature,

On behalf of APTA Alaska, we write to express our strong support for HB 272, legislation aligned with the So Every Body Can Move Act, that would require coverage of medically necessary activity-specific prostheses and orthoses.

As licensed Physical Therapists and Physical Therapy Assistants, we are movement experts many of whom work daily with Alaskans living with limb loss and limb difference. Our role extends beyond helping patients achieve basic ambulation. We are responsible for restoring strength, balance, endurance, and safe participation in meaningful life activities. For many Alaskans, those activities include hiking, fishing, skiing, hunting, working on uneven terrain, and participating in community recreation. Standard prosthetic or orthotic devices function well for some daily activities, but are often not biomechanically designed to safely support these higher-demand activities.

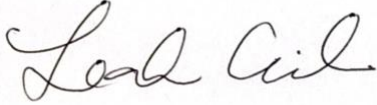
Without access to activity-specific devices, patients face increased risk of falls, overuse injuries, joint degeneration, chronic pain, and reduced physical activity. These limitations contribute to preventable secondary conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity and depression – ultimately increasing long-term healthcare costs and decreasing their quality of life. From a clinical perspective, activity-specific prostheses and orthoses are not recreational items; they are medically necessary tools that enable safe movement, effective rehabilitation, and long-term health maintenance.

HB 272 represents a proactive investment in public health and functional independence. Ensuring coverage for medically appropriate devices improves outcomes, supports participation in work and community life, and advances health equity for Alaskans with limb loss and limb difference.

APTA Alaska respectfully encourages your support of HB 272. This legislation aligns with our profession's mission to optimize movement, enhance quality of life, and promote equitable access to care across our state.

Thank you for your consideration and your service to the people of Alaska.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leah Einhorn". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Leah Einhorn, PT, DPT, OCS, FAAOMPT
President, APTA Alaska



UAA College of
Arts and Sciences
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

March 14, 2026

House Health & Social Services Committee
Alaska State Capitol, 120 4th Street Rm 3,
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Re: Support for House Bill 272 – Prosthetic and Orthotic Coverage

Dear Members of the House Health & Social Services Committee,

On behalf of the University of Alaska Anchorage Physical Therapist Assistant Program, the only physical therapy education program in the state of Alaska, I write in strong and heartfelt support of House Bill 272.

At UAA, we are not just teaching content. We are preparing future providers who will care for Alaskans in clinics, hospitals, and communities across this state. Our students are learning how to help people move again, return to work, care for their families, and regain a sense of independence after injury, illness, or limb loss.

What they quickly come to understand is that healing is not just about what happens in the clinic. It is about access.

I have watched students work with individuals who are motivated, resilient, and doing everything they can to recover, yet they are limited not by their effort, but by whether they can access the prosthetic or orthotic devices they need. These are not optional tools. They are essential for basic movement, safety, and dignity.

These moments stay with our students. They begin to realize that being a good clinician is not only about skill and knowledge. It is also about advocating for the person in front of them and recognizing the barriers that exist beyond their control.

House Bill 272 matters because it directly addresses one of those barriers. It helps ensure that medically necessary prosthetic and orthotic devices are accessible, allowing patients to



UAA College of
Arts and Sciences
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

fully participate in their care and in their lives. It aligns the care we are teaching with the care that should be possible.

As educators, we carry a responsibility not only to our students, but to the communities they will serve. We want to graduate clinicians who are prepared, compassionate, and able to make a real difference. That becomes much harder when the patients they work with cannot access the very tools needed for progress.

This bill supports our students' ability to provide meaningful care. More importantly, it supports Alaskans in maintaining independence, mobility, and quality of life.

We respectfully and strongly urge your support in passing House Bill 272. This is about more than coverage. It is about people, possibility, and the kind of healthcare system we want to build in Alaska.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lindsey Marsaw'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'L' and 'M'.

Lindsey Marsaw, ACCE, CSCS
Academic Coordinator of Clinical Education
Assistant Professor
Physical Therapist Assistant Program
Kinesiology
School of Preventive and Therapeutic Science
University of Alaska Anchorage
3211 Providence Dr.
PSB, Room 117C
Anchorage, AK 99508
907-786-6968