



ALASKA PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION, INC.

A CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION
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April 9, 2014

The Honorable Representative Austerman
The Honorable Representative Stoltze
Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, AK

RE: House Bill 316

Dear Representatives Austerman and Stoltze and Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is LeeAnne Carrothers, and I am president of the Alaska Physical Therapy Association.

On behalf of the members of the Alaska Physical Therapy Association, therefore, I would like to respectfully share our concerns with House Bill 316 – "An Act relating to workers' compensation fees for medical treatment and services; relating to workers' compensation regulations; and providing for an effective date."

The bill as written has the potential to effect many health care providers, especially those who own small, independent practices.

Physical therapists (PTs) are highly-educated, licensed health care professionals who help patients reduce pain and improve or restore mobility after injury- in many cases without expensive surgery and often reducing the need for long-term use of prescription medications and their side effects. In the case of workers' comp, this translates into an earlier return to work. Further, an 18 month study of 32000 patients with low back pain revealed that physical therapy started within 14 days of the initial patient/physician encounter was associated with reduced risk of subsequent surgery, injections, physician visits, opioid use, and advanced imaging, along with a corresponding reduction in overall LBP-related medical costs relative to delayed treatment by a physical therapist. Total health care costs for patients receiving early care from a physical therapist were an average of \$2,736.23 lower.

Because of the vital role of the physical therapist in the early management and recovery of individuals with work-related injuries, we believe that PTs should be included in the process of determining the conversion factors and rates that will be used to determine the payment for PT services.



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While the Alaska Physical Therapy Association supports efforts to reform and the improve the workers' comp system in our state, we have serious concerns that the proposed legislation will not provide opportunity for physical therapists and other healthcare providers to provide input and consultation in the setting of the conversion factor and rates.

We have provided a suggested written amendment as to how this might be accomplished, and we also respectfully request that a physical therapist should be included along with physicians and chiropractors as having a permanent place on the medical services board.

Given that the proposed legislation is a major change to the WC system, the Alaska Physical Therapy Association (AKAPTA) believes that healthcare providers, including Physical Therapists (PTs), need to have a voice in these discussions.

The Alaska Physical Therapy Association respectfully proposes the following amendment to Section 2 of HB 316 to allow for greater stakeholder input in the setting of the conversion factor and rates. The proposed amendment, which are in CAPS below, state the following:

(h) The board shall annually

(2) request and consider recommendations from the medical services review committee established under AS 23.30.095(j), AND OTHER ASSOCIATIONS REPRESENTING LICENSED HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS on setting the conversion factors and rates specified in (1) of this subsection; "

3) after consulting with the medical services review committee established under AS 23.30.095(j) AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS evaluate and revise by regulation the conversion factors and rates specified in (1) of this subsection

We respectfully ask that you consider adopting the above proposed amendment to HB 316 and grant a permanent place on the medical services board. Real reform to workers' comp cannot happen unless all the stakeholders have a voice in the discussion. Thank you for your consideration and for your service to the people of Alaska.

Sincerely,

LeeAnne Carrothers, PT, PhD
President, Alaska Physical Therapy Association