

LeeAnne Carrothers, PT, PhD

May 11, 2021

House State Affairs Committee
Re: House Senate Bill 47

Representative Kreiss-Tomkins and Members of the Committee:

My name is LeeAnne Carrothers, and I am a licensed physical therapist. I have 35 years' experience in the rehabilitation profession, both as a clinician and an educator. It is my contention that PTs, OTs and SLPs have the knowledge and skills to safely assess whether a patient meets eligibility requirements for a disability parking permit or plate.

As a physical therapist who, based on AK Statute can see patients without a physician referral, I assert that including physical therapists (PTs) among providers who can sign forms will save patient and clinician time and funds, as it will decrease the need for an additional visit to another provider. Physical therapists routinely see patients who have one or more conditions that meet the eligibility requirements for disability permit or plate. In consideration of a patient's eligibility, PTs would not (and do not) make medical diagnoses, as doing so would be a violation of our practice act. As movement specialists who work to help patients recover from illness or injury, we are well-versed in the functional impact of different conditions, that is how that condition prevents a person from being able to do what they want or need to do. After evaluating a patient, we can provide firsthand documentation of how well a person can (or cannot) move, how far and how well they can safely walk without stopping, what kind(s) of devices or assistance they need, or whether they require portable oxygen. This is true for patients with any class of condition, and not just the types of conditions listed on the form. i.e., cardiac, orthopedic, neurological, etc.

I would contend that we are thus well-qualified to make the professional judgment as to whether a patient currently meets requirements for a permit or plate and whether the condition is permanent or temporary.

Given the number of people whose functional mobility has been negatively impacted by COVID, we are seeing increased numbers of people who need therapy to return to doing what they want and need to do; these patients may need temporary or permanent access to accessible parking permits/plates. Many of these patients are currently working with rehabilitation therapists to regain, strength, endurance and functional abilities lost due to COVID. Successfully passing this bill will reduce administrative burden, patient and provider time, health care costs and allow physical and other rehabilitation therapists to practice at the level appropriate to their knowledge, skills, and experience.

Thank you for your work on this bill and on behalf of Alaska's citizens.

Sincerely,

LeeAnne Carrothers

LeeAnne Carrothers, PT, PhD
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