



AMERICAN OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION

TREATING OUR FAMILY AND YOURS



February 5, 2018

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
Chairwoman
Maryland State House Health and Government Operations Committee
House Office Building, Room 241
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairwoman Pendergrass:

The American Osteopathic Association (AOA) and the Maryland Association of Osteopathic Physicians (MAOP) are writing in opposition to HB 497. This bill expands the scope of practice for athletic trainers (ATs) to allow them to evaluate and treat illnesses, as well as injuries, without any additional education, training or competency demonstration requirements. AT education focuses on the prevention, recognition and rehabilitation of athletic injuries, and we believe that such a large increase in scope without a commensurate increase in education, training or examination requirements, could put the safety of Maryland patients at risk.

The AOA represents 137,000 osteopathic physicians (DOs) and osteopathic medical students, promotes public health, encourages scientific research, serves as the primary certifying body for DOs and is the accrediting agency for osteopathic medical schools. More information on DOs/osteopathic medicine can be found at www.osteopathic.org. MAOP is a professional medical organization that represents over 1,000 DOs providing patient care in Maryland.

ATs are trained to optimize activity and quality of life for physically active individuals. They have expertise in preventing and recognizing athletic injuries, providing first aid and implementing rehabilitation programs. This bill would expand their scope to allow them to treat illnesses, including complex neurologic conditions, with referral to another health care professional “as needed.” Without the comprehensive medical education that physicians receive, however, ATs may be unable to differentiate among symptoms common to both mild illnesses and more dangerous ones which require physician involvement.

Osteopathic physicians complete:

- **Four years of medical school** after a **four-year bachelor’s degree**. Medical school education includes **two years of didactic study** totaling upwards of 750 lecture/practice learning hours just within the first two years, **plus two more years of clinical rotations** done in community hospitals, major medical centers and doctors’ offices.
- **12,000 to 16,000 hours of supervised postgraduate medical education** (“residencies”) completed over the course of **three to seven years**, during which DOs develop advanced

knowledge and clinical skills relating to a wide variety of patient conditions over the course of three to six years.

ATs licensed in Maryland complete:

- A **bachelor's degree** in athletic training.
- A **Board of Certification Exam**.
- **No postgraduate education**.

This bill:

- Allows ATs to **evaluate, manage and administer** the initial **treatment of an illness**, as well as an injury, **with referral** “to an appropriate health care provider *as needed*.”
- Allows ATs to **perform** “**adjustments, manipulation, or high velocity mobilizations of the spine or extremities.**”
- Allows ATs to **recondition** “**systemic neurologic injuries, conditions or disease.**”
- Allows ATs to **treat** “**nonathletic injuries or disease.**”
- **Deletes the requirement that an AT must practice in a certain setting and leaves the procedures that an AT may perform and the mechanism of physician supervision up to individual evaluation and treatment protocols** agreed upon by an AT and his/her supervising physician.

ATs are not physicians, and lack the comprehensive medical education and training necessary to perform the additional services described in this bill. **We urge you to protect the safety of Maryland's patients by opposing HB 497.** Should you need any additional information, please feel free to contact Raine Richards, JD, Director, State Government Affairs at rrichards@osteopathic.org or (312) 202-8199.

Sincerely,



Mark A. Baker, DO
President, AOA



Brian Kahan, DO
President, MAOP

CC: William S. Mayo, DO, President-elect, AOA
Joseph M. Yasso, Jr., DO, Chair, Department of Governmental Affairs, AOA
Thomas L. Ely, DO, Chair, Bureau of State Government Affairs, AOA
Adrienne White-Faines, MPA, Chief Executive Officer, AOA
David Pugach, JD, Senior Vice President, Public Policy, AOA
Raine Richards, JD, Director, State Government Affairs, AOA
Stephanie Wilson, Executive Director, MAOP