



RHODE ISLAND ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS
STRONG MEDICINE FOR RHODE ISLAND



April 26, 2017

The Honorable Joshua Miller
Chairman
Rhode Island State Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
23 Howie Avenue
Warwick, Rhode Island 02888

Dear Chairman Miller:

The American Osteopathic Association (AOA), the Rhode Island Academy of Family Physicians (RIAFP) and the Rhode Island Society of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons (RISOPS) are writing to encourage you to oppose S 742. This bill would allow physical therapists (PTs) to order diagnostic studies and imaging, services for which they lack comprehensive training and understanding. The AOA, RIAFP and RISOPS believe that this increase in scope of practice for PTs is inappropriate, could lead to significant costs to the health care system in Rhode Island, and potentially place the health and safety of patients in the state at risk.

The AOA represents nearly 130,000 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. RIAFP is an over 185-member Rhode Island affiliate of the American Academy of Family Physicians, which exists to promote the health of patients, families, and communities of Rhode Island by advancing the specialty of family medicine through education and advocacy. RISOPS is a professional medical organization that represents over 300 DOs providing patient care in Rhode Island.

The AOA, RIAFP and RISOPS support the “team” approach to medical care because the physician-led medical model ensures that professionals with complete medical education and training are adequately involved in patient care. While we value the contributions of PTs to the health care delivery system, we believe any expansion of their authority to provide services to patients requires appropriate physician oversight and additional education, training and competency demonstration requirements, which this bill does not provide.

Osteopathic and allopathic (MD) physician education includes:

- **Four years of medical school**, which 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**, i.e., residencies, where DOs and MDs develop advanced knowledge and clinical skills relating to a wide variety of patient conditions.
- Rhode Island-licensed physicians must complete **40 continuing medical education hours per two-year renewal period**.

PT education includes:

- Graduating from an education program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE), which requires PTs to complete a doctorate program of physical therapy education that **includes a minimum of only 120 academic semester credits**.
- Following graduation, PTs are **not required to complete any postgraduate supervised medical education**.
- **Rhode Island defers to CAPTE to set educational curriculum requirements**, which “include content and learning experiences in...topics [including] anatomy, physiology [and] diagnostic imaging,” but do not specify the amount of education PTs receive in each subject.¹
- The Doctor of Physical Therapy degree at the University of Rhode Island **requires only two credit hours of coursework in diagnostic imaging**.²

Diagnostic imaging, including X-rays, poses a potential risk to patient safety, due to the presence of radiation, which can cause cell mutations that may lead to cancer. If the number of clinicians with the ability to order diagnostic imaging increases, the risk that patients will be exposed to duplicative or otherwise unnecessary imaging also increases. Further, PTs have not had similar education and training to a physician, which prepares them to understand the risks and appropriate use of diagnostic imaging.

We urge you to protect the safety of Rhode Island patients by opposing S 742. Should you need any additional information, please feel free to contact Nicholas Schilligo, MS, Associate Vice President, State Government Affairs, at nschilligo@osteopathic.org or (800) 621-1773, ext. 8185.

Sincerely,



Boyd R. Buser, DO
President, AOA



David Bica, DO
President, RIAFP



Gregory G. Allen Jr., DO
President, RISOPS

¹ See http://www.capteonline.org/uploadedFiles/CAPTEorg/Portal/CAPTEPortal_PTStandardsEvidence.doc.

² See <https://web.uri.edu/physical-therapy/academics/>.

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