



# NANCY VANDERMEER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 70<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

TO: Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Health

FROM: State Representative Nancy VanderMeer

DATE: October 29, 2019

SUBJECT: Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 581

Thank you Chairman Sanfelippo and members of the Assembly Committee on Health for holding a hearing on AB 581 today. This legislation seeks to clarify what determines “supervision” of a student Physical Therapist Assistant or student Physical Therapist by a Physical Therapist (PT) or Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA). The bill provides statutory direction to the Department of Safety and Professional Services, along with the Physical Therapy Examining Board (PTEB) to define in rules what supervision of PT and PTA students entails.

Currently, students are only addressed in statute in regards to not needing a license if assisting in addressing the physical therapist’s plan of care. The Physical Therapy Examining Board has passed clear rules concerning the supervision of PTAs and of unlicensed personnel, however students are not directly addressed. This is causing clinical sites to default to the requirements for unlicensed personnel which requires the Physical Therapist to be on premise. Yet, students are clearly a separate category in statute when addressing individuals who do not need a license ((Chapter 448.52 (1m) (b) and (c)).

Clinical sites that historically accepted and trained Student Physical Therapist Assistants (SPTAs) under the direct supervision of a PTA and the general supervision of a PT are no longer accepting SPTAs for these clinical affiliations because they do not consistently have a PT on premise (example: PTAs carrying out the physical therapist’s plan of care in school settings and in-home care). There are a number of educational programs in Wisconsin that are having difficulty finding sites to place students for their necessary hands-on clinical education required for their students to graduate. One example is Western Technical College, located in my legislative district, whose Program Head of their Physical Therapist Assistant Program originally brought this to my attention.

To be clear, this legislation is needed because the Department of Safety and Professional Services needs direct statutory authority to promulgate rules rather than rely on past practices of agency guidelines. In addition to this situation being a frustration for students, it is anticipated that if the legislature does not take action to provide clarification on this issue, a significant workforce shortage in this area will ensue.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify here today. I ask that you join Senator Testin and myself in supporting this legislation. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.



# PATRICK TESTIN

## STATE SENATOR

DATE: October 29, 2019  
RE: **Testimony on 2019 Assembly Bill 581**  
TO: The Assembly Committee on Health  
FROM: Senator Patrick Testin

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Thank you members of the Assembly Committee on Health for accepting my testimony on Assembly Bill 581.

Currently, the training and placement of Student Physical Therapist Assistants (SPTAs) and Student Physical Therapists (SPTs) has become an issue due to the lack of clarity in our statutes, which do not address the “supervision” of a student.

The Physical Therapy Examining Board (PTEB) has passed clear rules concerning the supervision of PTAs and of unlicensed personnel. However, students are not directly addressed. This is causing clinical sites to default to the requirements for unlicensed personnel, which requires the physical therapist to be on premise.

Clinical sites that historically accepted and trained SPTAs under the direct supervision of a PTA and the general supervision of a PT are no longer accepting these students for these clinical affiliations because they do not consistently have a PT on premise.

There are nine PTA educational programs in Wisconsin that are having difficulty finding sites to provide the hands-on clinical education required for their students to graduate. In addition to this being a frustration for the students, it is anticipated that this may result in a significant workforce shortage.

To correct this issue, AB 581 will provide statutory direction to the Department of Safety and Professional Services, along with the Physical Therapy Examining Board (PTEB) to define in rules what supervision of PT and PTA students entails.

Thank you again for listening to my testimony and I hope that you will join me in supporting this bill.

TO: Chairman Sanfelippo, Members  
Assembly Committee on Health

FR: Shari Berry

DA: October 29, 2019

RE: Support of AB 581

Good morning Chairman Sanfelippo and members. My name is Shari Berry. I am a physical therapist and live in Tomah, WI where I worked at Tomah Memorial Hospital from 1994 to 2005. I then took a fulltime teaching position in the physical therapist assistant (PTA) program at Western Technical College in La Crosse. I am still teaching at Western and I have been the program director for the past 10 years. I also currently serve on the Physical Therapy Examining Board (PTEB) in the role of chairperson. I have been on the board for the past 9 years and the chair for the past 3 years. I am here today to share information on supervision of student PT's and PTA's and to answer any questions you may have related to AB 581.

This bill seeks to clarify a section of statute that has created confusion in the state. Numerous interpretations have been rendered over the years with the issue demanding attention in the fall of 2016. At that time a physical therapist in a school district asked the PTEB for a specific opinion or interpretation of the rules regarding supervision for a student physical therapist assistant (SPTA).

The board, to answer the question, asked for an interpretation of the statute from legal counsel at the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS). That interpretation and ensuing board discussion made it clear to all involved that supervision of the student PTA needed to be clarified. The board therefore attempted to clarify this issue by proposing a rule addressing supervision of unlicensed personnel. Unfortunately, rule writing was not an option as there was not a specific statute that would allow for promulgation of rules. The only way to clarify rule was to add specific statutory language. As a result, I reached out to Rep. VanderMeer who has proven to be a patient and persistent supporter in this effort. I am sincerely thankful to her for her continued support and I would like to also thank Senator Testin for his leadership in the Senate.

For clarity, it is important to know that clinical experiences in PT and PTA education utilize a one-to-one or one-to-two model where one clinical instructor supervises one or two students. The most common model in PTA education is a one-to-one model. There are 9 total schools in Wisconsin that offer the PTA degree: 7 PTA schools in the Wisconsin Technical college system and 2 private schools. Each of those programs accepts between 15 and 24 students annually and each of those programs has three clinical experiences. If you use 20 students as an average number of students in each program, 540 clinical sites/ instructors are needed each year.

Additionally, there are 6 PT schools in the state who also place students in the same settings as the PTA schools. Clinical site availability is therefore a challenge each year. Western Technical College has lost numerous clinical site placements over the years due to the site not having the capacity for the PTs to handle the demands of clinical placement for both PT and PTA students. Specifically, skilled nursing facilities, home health and school settings struggle with this issue the most. Students end up traveling greater distances and spending more money on clinical education each year. In the worst-case scenario,

a student who cannot be placed in the required clinical fieldwork will end up with a delayed graduation and delayed entry into the work force.

While a licensed PT is the only qualified clinical supervisor for a student PT, a PT or a licensed PTA is qualified to supervise the student PTA. The PTA who supervises a student PTA is working as a team with a PT just as with any other delegated task (PT Chapter 5.01). The American Physical Therapy Association recognizes the issue of clinical site availability on a national level and has clearly stated its support of licensed PTAs supervising student PTAs in its position statement titled, "SUPERVISION OF STUDENT PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANTS (copy of full statement below).

Clarifying this statute and writing rule will allow PT and PTA programs to place students in required clinical experiences with clear information on supervision that is in alignment with current practice and professional standards. It is LONG overdue, and I humbly ask for you to move this bill forward. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

**Copy of SUPERVISION OF STUDENT PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANTS HOD P06-11-09-17  
[Amended HOD P06-00-19- 31; HOD 06-96-20-35; HOD 06-95-20-11] [Position]**

Student physical therapist assistants, when participating as part of a physical therapist assistant education curriculum, and when acting in accordance with American Physical Therapy Association policy and applicable state laws and regulations, are qualified to perform selected physical therapy interventions under the direction and supervision of either the physical therapist alone or the physical therapist and physical therapist assistant working as a team.

When the student physical therapist assistant is participating in the delivery of physical therapy services while being supervised by the physical therapist alone or the physical therapist and physical therapist assistant working as a team, the physical therapist or the physical therapist assistant is physically present and immediately available at all times. The physical therapist or the physical therapist assistant will have direct contact with the patient/client during each visit as visit is defined in the Guide to Physical Therapist Practice.

The physical therapist maintains responsibility for patient/client management at all times, including appropriate utilization of the physical therapist assistant as described in Direction and Supervision of the Physical Therapist Assistant, and for interventions performed by the student physical therapist assistant. Relationship to Vision 2020: Autonomous Practice; Professionalism; (Practice Department, ext 3176)



Wisconsin Physical Therapy Association

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October 29, 2019

To: Assembly Committee on Health

Representative Sanfelippo (Chair)

Representative Kurtz (Vice-Chair)

Representative Rodriguez

Representative Edming

Representative Skowronski

Representative Wichgers

Representative Murphy

Representative VanderMeer

Representative Felzkowski

Representative Magnafici

Representative Kolste

Representative Riemer

Representative Subeck

Representative Anderson

Representative Vining

**Re: Testimony on Assembly Bill 581**

Representative Sanfelippo and members of the committee, my name is Connie Kittleson and I am the Past President of the Wisconsin Physical Therapy Association. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of Assembly Bill 581.

Currently statutes only address physical therapist (PT) students and physical therapist assistant (PTA) students with regards to licensure. Neither need a license if they are assisting in addressing the physical therapist's plan of care. The **supervision of students is not addressed in statute or rules**. Historically in Wisconsin, the practice has been that PT students are supervised a PT and PTA students are supervised either by a PT or by a PTA who is working under the general the supervision of a PT. The PTEB has passed clear rules regarding the supervision of PTAs and of unlicensed personnel, however, we have no clear guidelines for student.

This **lack of clarity** has resulted in facilities diverting from historical practice and defaulting to the supervision of unlicensed personnel, yet students are clearly a separate category of unlicensed individuals with regards to licensure requirement in statute. Defaulting to the direct on-site supervision of a PT has caused **limited access to hands-on training for our PTA students**. There are numerous practice settings where the PT may not be on site (schools, long term care, home care). Many of these facilities are no longer accepting PTA students for their clinical rotations. Obtaining hands-on clinical training is critical for their education and required for graduation. **With nine PTA schools in the state, this lack of clarity threatens the graduation of numerous potential practitioners at a time when access to quality healthcare is a priority.**

This legislation simply seeks to clarify in statutes and rules what determines "supervision" of a student PTA or student PT by a PT or PTA. This legislation will provide statutory direction to the Department of Safety and Professional Services, along with the Physical Therapy Examining Board (PTEB) to define in rules what supervision of student PTs and student PTAs entails.

I thank you for your time and for allowing me to speak. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Connie Kittleson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Connie Kittleson, PT, DPT

Past President

Wisconsin Physical Therapy Association



October 29, 2019

To: Chairman Sanfilippo and the members of the Assembly Committee on Health

Re: Testimony in support of AB-581, relating to the practice of physical therapy students and physical therapist assistant students and granting rule-making authority.

Good morning Chairman Sanfelippo and members of the Assembly Committee on Health. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to testify on AB-581. My name is Lindsay Dolan and I am a Doctor of Physical Therapy Student at the School of Medicine & Public Health at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

I respectfully ask that you support passage of AB-581, which will help clarify 'supervision' of a Student Physical Therapist Assistant (SPTA) and Student Physical Therapist (SPT). By giving the Physical Therapy Examining Board (PTEB) and the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DPS) the explicit authority to define what qualifies as supervision of PTA and PT students, we can continue our hands-on training needed to become licensed practitioners.

Recently, the lack of a clear statute and therefore lack of clear rules, has forced clinical sites to treat physical therapy students the same way in terms of supervision as they do unlicensed personnel. However, students training to become fully licensed PTs or PTAs are in a separate statutory category and should be treated differently than unlicensed personnel as it relates to supervision.

All the services that SPTAs provide are done so under a licensed Physical Therapist's plan of care – this bill will not change that. It simply allows clinical sites to continue to provide education to SPTAs as they did in the past, without having a PT on site throughout every portion of the students' training.

We are urging your support of this bill as soon as possible. Clinical rotations are an integral and essential educational experience for every student in the healthcare field. There are clinical sites today that previously accepted and trained SPTAs that are no longer doing so, simply because they don't always have a PT on premise. Losing these clinical sites as sources of experience is a heavy blow to SPTA educational programs, which we have 9 of in Wisconsin. By giving the PTEB the authority to promulgate rules, we will ensure that SPTs and SPTAs will have up-to-date and appropriate rules that allow them to get the clinical experience they need to graduate and enter our healthcare workforce.

I'd like to thank Representative VanderMeer and Senator Testin for their work on this bill and I ask that you please support passage of AB-581. I would be happy to address any questions from committee members at this time.

Thank you,  
Lindsay Dolan