



Senate Fiscal Agency
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BILL ANALYSIS

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Senate Bill 380 (as passed by the Senate)
Sponsor: Senator Tom George
Committee: Health Policy

Date Completed: 6-7-05

RATIONALE

Under the Public Health Code, a physical therapist may treat an individual only upon the prescription of a licensed physician. A physician's assistant, who holds a subfield license under the Code, does not have the authority to prescribe physical therapy for a patient. Apparently, this limitation sometimes results in delays in the delivery of patient care. It has been suggested that the authority to prescribe physical therapy should be extended to physician's assistants.

CONTENT

The bill would amend Part 178 (Physical Therapy) of the Public Health Code to extend the authority to prescribe physical therapy to an individual holding a subfield license.

Currently, a physical therapist may engage in the actual treatment of an individual only upon the prescription of an individual holding a license, other than a subfield license, issued under Part 166 (Dentistry), 170 (Medicine), 175 (Osteopathic Medicine and Surgery), or 180 (Podiatric Medicine and Surgery), or the equivalent license issued by another state. The Code also specifies that Part 178 does not prohibit a hospital, as a condition of employment or the granting of staff privileges, from requiring a physical therapist to practice in the hospital only upon the prescription of an individual holding a license, other than a subfield license. The bill would delete the exceptions for the holder of a subfield license.

(Under the Code, "health profession subfield" means an area of practice within the scope of activities, functions, and duties of a licensed health profession that requires

less comprehensive knowledge and skill than are required to practice the full scope of the health profession.)

MCL 333.17820 & 333.17822

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

The current provisions preventing a physician's assistant from prescribing physical therapy are antiquated and unnecessary in light of the extensive training and qualifications of physician's assistants, and their increased use in the health care system. Eliminating this restriction would result in more timely delivery of patient care in many situations. Currently, for example, a patient might have to wait in the hospital after surgery for his or her physician to write a prescription for physical therapy. If the physician happens to be busy performing another surgery, however, the patient might have to wait an unnecessarily long time. If the limitation were removed, a physician's assistant could write the prescription and the patient could leave the hospital sooner.

Physician's assistants are not restricted in referring patients to other kinds of specialists, and, in fact, do so routinely. The bill would improve efficiency without changing a physician's assistant's scope of practice or the required level of supervision by a physician.

Legislative Analyst: Julie Koval

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

Fiscal Analyst: David Fosdick

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.