

May 27, 2020

Senate Health Committee Hearing Testimony
Re: HB20 -1230 – Occupational Therapy Practice Act

Thank you Madame Chair and members of the Committee,

My name is Bailey LeBoeuf Johnson, and I am an occupational therapist. I work with adults in long term care and in the community who experience a variety of physical, mental, and cognitive disorders. I will discuss why licensure is essential to me and explain the updates we have recommended to the Occupational Therapy Practice Act this year that are reflected in HB20-1230.

Occupational therapy (OT) practitioners help people across the lifespan to do the things they want and need to do in their everyday life (we call those daily activities “occupations”). **We enable people of all ages to live life to its fullest by promoting health and preventing—or living better with—injury, illness, or disability.**

Treatments are as varied as the activities that our clients want to do. OT includes hands-on manual therapy for a client after shoulder surgery to improve shoulder range of motion and enable getting dressed without pain. OT also includes expert clinical judgment to determine how a client with a memory disorder can safely navigate the grocery store to purchase items to prepare a meal at home,

These interventions and assessments require skill and expertise. They may be harmful if done by an individual who is not an OT practitioner and lacks formal education and comprehensive training. My clients trust me to ensure their safety during all OT encounters. Licensure supports this basis of trust by ensuring that only trained and certified OT practitioners provide skilled intervention. Licensure also limits the potential of harm caused by unqualified individuals.

Licensure protects at risk-populations from financial exploitation that may occur if recommendations for therapy are made when they are not indicated. **Licensure is an effective way to regulate occupational therapy practices so that practitioners provide optimal care based on the standards required for training and in the best interests of the vulnerable populations we serve.** For the protection of all we serve, occupational therapy practitioners are regulated through licensure in all 50 states and U.S. jurisdictions.

To update our OT Practice Act, we updated language to align with best practice and our practice framework. We clarified our ability to identify certain disorders recognized within our scope, such as sensory processing disorder or upper extremity disorders. We added a comprehensive explanation of our role in mental health settings to address the systemic funding barriers encountered while serving adults experiencing mental illness in Colorado. Titles and exclusions have been revised to include doctoral education levels. We propose these changes to clarify the occupational therapy scope of practice needed to meet society's needs. The additions are necessary to reflect best practice and ensure we meet the individual needs of our clients based on the most up-to-date evidence.

I value maintaining and keeping healthcare practitioners' regulations updated and reflecting contemporary practice, and so do my occupational therapy colleagues. **It is our responsibility to protect and provide the best care for at-risk CO residents who find themselves in need of occupational therapy services so they can live their lives to the fullest.**

Thank you.

Bailey LeBoeuf Johnson, MS, OTR/L
Occupational Therapist

Occupational Therapy Association of Colorado – Public Policy Chair

May 27, 2020

Senate Health Committee Hearing Testimony

Re: HB20 -1230

Thank you, madam chair and the members of the committee for giving us an opportunity to submit written testimony.

My name is Pamela DiPasquale-Lehnerz and I am currently the President of the Occupational Therapy Association of Colorado. There are approximately 5000 occupational therapy practitioners in the state of Colorado. Our organization supports and represents both occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants.

We ask for your support of House Bill 20-1230 which continues the consumer protection of health services with licensure for these occupations.

This legislation protects our most vulnerable populations who are compromised either permanently or temporarily in cognition, mental health and mobility functions. These populations are our elderly in skilled nursing facilities, those with mental health disabilities in psychiatric settings, adults with cognitive delays in group homes, children with significant developmental delays in the schools and people with compromised health conditions that put them at risk for long term care societal needs.

Occupational therapy has a more than 100-year history in this country of providing care to individuals who have suffered significant mental and physical health impacts as a result of stroke, mental health disorders, traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury, birth defects, autism, chronic pain, amputations, and disease processes such as rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's and cancer. As occupational therapy practitioners, we have been involved in the health consequences of both World Wars, the mechanization of farm machinery, automation in our factories, the polio epidemic, traumatic auto accidents and rehabilitation of individuals who have computer overuse injuries.

We continue to evolve our practice to meet the current needs of society which now includes the acute rehabilitation of COVID-19 patients as primary care providers.

We work with our clients or patients to return them to work, increase their self-care independence, ensure successful accommodation to schools, keep them in their homes, promote community reintegration and general wellness.

Colorado occupational therapy consumers need your protection afforded by continuing the OT Practice Act and we thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Pam DiPasquale-Lehnerz MS,OTR/L

President

Occupational Therapy Association of Colorado