

SS SB 51 -- PHYSICAL THERAPISTS

SPONSOR: Eslinger

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Professional Registration and Licensing by a vote of 10 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 8 to 0.

This bill modifies the laws regarding physical therapists so that physical therapists no longer need a prescription or referral from a doctor in order to evaluate and initiate treatment on a patient, as long as the physical therapist has a Doctorate of Physical Therapy Degree or has 5 years of clinical practice as a physical therapist. However, the bill does require a physical therapist to refer to an approved health care provider, any patient whose condition is beyond the physical therapist's scope of practice. The physical therapist must also refer any patient who does not demonstrate measurable or functional improvement after 10 visits or 30 days, whichever occurs first.

The physical therapist must also consult with an approved health care provider before continuing therapy if after 10 visits or 30 days, whichever occurs first, the patient has demonstrated measurable or functional improvement from the physical therapy and the physical therapist believes that continuation of physical therapy is necessary. Continued physical therapy must be in accordance with any direction of the health care provider. The physical therapist must notify the health care provider of continuing physical therapy every 10 visits or 30 days after the initial consultation unless the consulting approved health care provider directs otherwise. The bill allows the Board of Registration for the Healing Arts to file a complaint against a physical therapist for evaluating or treating a patient in a manner inconsistent with provisions of the bill and existing law governing the scope of practice for physical therapists, rather than allowing the Board to file a complaint for practicing or offering to practice independent of a prescription and the direction of certain health care providers listed in current law.

This bill is similar to HB 115 & 99 (2023), HB 1555 (2022), and HB 367 (2021).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this removes barriers and allows for quicker access to care which can result in less care needed. We are currently losing out on tax dollars from patients crossing state borders to see a physical therapist without a referral.

Testifying in person for the bill were Senator Eslinger; and Jennifer Schnieders, Missouri Physical Therapy Association.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.