

October 31, 2013

The Honorable Ben Ray Lujan
The Honorable Gus Bilirakis
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Lujan and Bilirakis:

The Private Practice Section of the American Physical Therapy Association (PPS) is pleased to strongly endorse H.R. 3426 the *Prevent Interruptions in Physical Therapy Act*, which adds physical therapists to the statute allowing locum tenens arrangements under Medicare. PPS commends you for your leadership and appreciates your efforts to relieve this burden on private practice physical therapists and their patients. If enacted, H.R. 3426 will promote uninterrupted care for physical therapy patients and thereby foster continued progress and positive outcomes.

The over 4200 members of PPS own and operate small businesses that provide convenient, cost-effective rehabilitative therapy to patients across the spectrum of impairments and functional limitations secondary to neurologic and/or musculoskeletal conditions. The PPS endeavors to foster the growth, economic viability, and business success, of physical therapist-owned physical therapy services provided for the benefit of the public.

Locum tenens is a longstanding and widespread practice by which physicians retain other licensed and qualified physicians to substitute in their professional practices when they are absent for reasons of illness, pregnancy, vacation or continuing medical education. Under Medicare, it is acceptable for the regular physician to bill and receive Medicare payment for the substitute physician's services as if he, or she, performed them. The patient's regular physician may submit a claim and (if assignment is accepted) receive the Part B payment for covered visit of a locum tenens physician who is not an employee of the regular physician and whose services for patients of the regular physician are not restricted to the regular physician's offices, provided specific criteria are met.

Because current law does not include physical therapists (PTs) in the locum tenens provision, private practice PTs are not able to bring in another qualified licensed physical therapist to treat Medicare patients when the practice owner must be temporarily absent due to illness, pregnancy, vacation or professional development. Therefore, many PTs in private practice must choose to decline to take these absences or interrupt the patient's care which negatively impacts the patient's progress and can be more costly when care is resumed.

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H.R. 3426 would amend the Medicare statute by adding physical therapists to the list of professionals allowed to retain a qualified temporary substitute provider. Thus, the legislation promotes uninterrupted care for physical therapy patients and thereby fosters continued progress and positive outcomes, both of which are in the best interest of Medicare patients and the Medicare program. This patient-centric policy change is an essential modernization of Medicare reimbursement policy.

PPS greatly appreciates your leadership on this issue and pledges its support for the *Prevent Interruptions in Physical Therapy Act*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tom DiAngelis".

Tom DiAngelis, PT, DPT
President
Private Practice Section, APTA