



# CONNECTICUT PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION

A COMPONENT OF THE AMERICAN PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION

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## **Testimony of Joan-Alice Taylor, President Connecticut Physical Therapy Association**

**on**

## **SB 1052, An Act Concerning Acupuncture**

**Before the Joint Committee on Public Health**

**March 2, 2011**

Chairperson Gerratana, Chairperson Ritter, members of the Committee, my name is Joan-Alice Taylor and I am the current President of the Connecticut Physical Therapy Association (CPTA). This testimony is submitted concerning SB 1052, AAC The Practice of Acupuncture. The CPTA has no concerns with the bill as long as the language remains in Section 2 (g) that specifically exempts physical therapists from restrictions as long as their care is within accepted physical therapy standards. If this language were to be removed, we would strongly oppose the proposal.

In physical therapy, dry needling is a neuro-physiological evidence-based treatment technique that requires effective manual assessment of the neuromuscular system. Many physical therapists are well trained to utilize dry needling in conjunction with manual physical therapy interventions. Research supports that dry needling improves pain control, reduces muscle tension, normalizes biochemical and electrical dysfunction of motor endplates, and facilitates an accelerated return to active rehabilitation.

Dry needling is an intervention that is being utilized currently by physical therapists across the country. *The Guide to Physical Therapist Practice*, which defines much of the scope of practice of the physical therapist profession, lists numerous methods, techniques and procedural interventions a physical therapist may utilize to produce a change consistent with their diagnosis. Manual therapy techniques are designed to improve muscle function, induce relaxation and decrease pain. The intent of dry needling is compatible with this component of physical therapy practice. The procedural intervention of dry needling is therefore not inconsistent with *The Guide to Physical Therapist Practice*.

At the state level, a number of state boards of physical therapy have taken the step to recognize dry needling as being within the legal scope of practice, including the following: Alabama, Colorado, Maryland, Georgia, New Mexico, New Hampshire, South Carolina and Virginia. Physical therapists who utilize dry needling in these states do not refer to the technique as acupuncture or hold themselves out to the public as practicing acupuncture. While the Connecticut Physical Therapy Board of Examiners has not been asked to rule on this issue, we are comfortable that the Board would reach the same conclusion based on *The Guide to Physical*

*Therapist Practice* and statutory language which allows for “the use of . . . rehabilitative procedures . . . for the purpose of preventing, correcting or alleviating a physical or mental disability.”

Our concern, should the proposal before the committee today be amended is that the “dry needling” practice of qualified manual physical therapists could be prohibited simply because the tool used (needles) is similar to the tools used in acupuncture. The treatment, however, has objectives and philosophy that are unrelated to acupuncture. In no way do physical therapists attempt to control and regulate the flow and balance of energy, nor is dry needling based on Eastern and metaphysical concepts.

We appreciate that the proposal, as heard before the committee, recognizes that there is often overlap between the tools and techniques of different health care professions. We applaud the sponsors for this recognition of physical therapy and encourage the Committee to support the language of that section as presented.

Again, I'd like to thank the Committee for your time today. I look forward to working with you on this and other issues throughout the session.