



CONNECTICUT PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION

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Testimony of James P. Leahy, CAE Executive Director, CT Physical Therapy Association

In support of H.B 5625, AAC The Definition of Surgery

Before the Joint Committee on Public Health February 23, 2015

Chairperson Gerratana, Chairperson Ritter, Members of the Public Health Committee. My name is James Leahy and I am the Executive Director for the Connecticut Physical Therapy Association. I am here today to testify in support of the concept of HB 5625, AAC the Definition of Surgery, with some reservations.

It is our belief that a specific definition of surgery in the Connecticut General Statutes would lead to clarification of practice and give health care providers some certainty with regard to their scope. Just a few years ago, there was concern that “sharp debridement”, the act of excising dead tissue from a healing wound in order to assist in healing and rehabilitation, was a form of surgery. We met with the Department and showed how this debridement is a fundamental part of physical therapy in acute care and home care settings and should be allowed. The matter did, however cause great stress for many of our members over a number of months.

Other practices that are generally regarded as within the scope of physical therapy, including ultrasound, dry needling, low level laser therapy to name a few, are all practices which we are concerned could be affected by the definition currently in HB 5625. Given that physical therapists are expressly prohibited from performing surgery, it would need to be clear that these existing treatments are not covered under any definition of surgery.

We also strongly encourage the committee to include language in any bill it supports to clarify that nothing in this bill would preclude a licensed health care provider from practicing within their scope of practice. This would allow professions, such as physical therapy, to continue to develop new methods of treatment without needing to come back to this legislature for each and every new protocol.

Physical therapists are not interested, in any way, of performing surgery. We are, however, committed to working with our patient populations to provide the best care possible. We encourage the committee to support a definition of surgery which protects patients without restricting their access to safe, effective care.

Thanks for the opportunity to testify. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.