

May 6, 2014

Testimony of Jeff Ostrowski, PT

Senate Bill 594, Printer's No. 1943

I respectfully ask that you allow this letter to serve as my written testimony regarding Senate Bill 594, Printer's No. 1943 (SB 594) and include this letter as part of the official hearing record. SB 594 is of concern to me in my role as a licensed physical therapist practicing in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. For the reasons set forth below I strongly support SB 594 and its underlying premise of the need in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for a mechanism to establish, and subsequently enforce, reasonable cost sharing amounts for physical therapy.

The health care system is best and most economically served when patients have access to low cost, low risk, high quality interventions. Physical therapy is one such intervention. Physical therapists are low cost providers in the health care continuum. Money spent on physical therapy can save downstream costs by preventing the need for surgeries, hospitalizations and chronic use of medications. All of these options are more expensive and have significant risk factors that are not seen with physical therapy treatment. Physical therapy care has been shown to prevent the need for patients to access these riskier and more expensive options. High co-pays encourage patients to opt out of therapy. The alternative is more expensive procedures which cause costs to go up for all of us. Other testimony that you will hear or read today provides references to studies that support these statements; I personally see this play out every day with physical therapy patients in the Commonwealth.

I have the opportunity to work with approximately 80 physical therapists who provide services in many clinics in Philadelphia and the surrounding counties. I can tell you that not a day goes by when the topic of high copayments is not discussed in some capacity. One specific area of discussion is often patients who self-discharge from therapy due to high co-payments before a plan of care is completed or patients who otherwise attend therapy at less than frequency recommended by the referring physician. An example is a patient who has had a knee replacement. Often times, these patients develop stiffness and weakness which impedes walking and other necessary functions. Physical therapy is an essential component of the post-operative care. Without it, the surgical procedure is not optimized. A high co-payment may cause a patient to self-discharge before they have returned to optimal function. This patient may not be able to return to work as soon as possible. The patient may need to give up on activities they want and need to do or not be able to perform essential functions. In the worst case scenario, the patient may require more invasive medical procedures to address the chronic issues that could have been adequately addressed by completing the therapy plan of care.

In addition to regular discussions with fellow therapists, our staff is in regular contact with physicians who recognize the value of physical therapy and seek to refer their patients. Many of these physicians express similar frustration over high copayments for physical therapy. For example, physicians tell us that many patients who they refer to therapy (some estimate 50%) never actually attend even one session of therapy. When a reason is asked, many of the patients cite high co-payment as the reason for forgoing recommended physical therapy care. From a "cost to the healthcare system" perspective, many physicians have also reported to our staff that they are required to spend increasing amounts of time convincing patients that physical therapy is necessary to treat their respective injury. Physicians have reported to our staff that they simply can not take on the administrative burden of taking ten minutes to

convince a patient that physical therapy, despite the often high copayment associated with it, is necessary to achieve an optimal outcome.

For the reasons illustrated above, I strongly support SB 594. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony regarding this legislation.

Very truly yours,

Jeff Ostrowski, PT