



## APTA Brief on State Government Affairs

**State:** Virginia

**Issue(s):** Patient access to physical therapy (direct access)

**Bill number:** House Bill 1457/Senate Bill 776

**Text of legislation:** [HB 1457](#) and [SB 776](#)

On April 15, 2015, the Virginia General Assembly gave final approval to legislation that improves patient access to physical therapy. The legislation was sponsored by Virginia State Delegate John O'Bannon, MD, and Virginia State Senator Stephen D. Newman and advocated for by the Virginia Physical Therapy Association (VPTA). The new law will become effective July 1, 2015.

### **Patient direct access to physical therapy**

HB 1457/SB 776 amends the Virginia physical therapy practice act to expand the length of time a physical therapist may provide treatment to a patient without a physician's referral. Under the new legislation, patients will be able to access physical therapy evaluation and treatment for up to 30 days without a referral. Current law allows for only 14 days. The legislation also makes several administrative simplifications that will improve patient access in Virginia, including changes to the current certification process and education requirements for physical therapists providing services without a referral.

### **Statement from the Virginia Physical Therapy Association**

"I want to thank the members of the General Assembly, who recognized the value of early access to physical therapy services and gave the bill unanimous support at every vote," said Virginia Physical Therapy Association Chapter President Thomas Bohanon Jr, PT, DPT, OCS. "This legislation will ensure patients have access to the right care at the right time."

***Of note:*** 2015 has been a busy year in the statehouses on the issue of patient access to PT services. Legislation in New Mexico improving that state's patient access law was signed by Governor Susana Martinez on April 10. In Georgia, HB 505 was signed by Governor Nathan Deal on May 5. Meanwhile bills in Florida and Texas are still under consideration.