

Protecting Student Athletes From Concussions Act (H.R. 5611/S. 2600)



Position

The American Physical Therapy Association strongly supports the Protecting Student Athletes from Concussions Act (H.R. 5611/S. 2600). This legislation encourages the development of concussion management guidelines that will strengthen the procedures involving the prevention, identification, and treatment of concussions in elementary and secondary schools. This legislation was introduced in the U.S. House by Rep. Mark DeSaulnier, D-Calif., and Rep. Stauber, R-Minn., on January 15, 2020, and in the U.S. Senate by Sen. Richard Durbin, D-Ill. on October 15, 2019.

Background

Concussions in student athletes are a growing public health problem that demands immediate attention. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that in 2017, nearly 2.5 million high school students reported having at least one concussion related to sports or physical activity over the span of a year, and an estimated 1 million students reported having two or more concussions during the same time frame. The rising statistics have been accompanied by an unparalleled increase in public awareness regarding the issue of concussion management. Legislative and policy efforts at the state and local level on concussion management have been highly inconsistent. This inconsistency can be a detriment to the quality of care and considerations necessary for the complexity of concussion injuries within active student athletes.

Concussion Management

The management of a concussion involves a continuum of care, which includes prevention, detection, rehabilitation, and return to participation in activity. APTA believes that concussions should be evaluated and managed by a multidisciplinary team of licensed health care providers that includes a physical therapist. Concussions are complex injuries that can have diverse effects on the indi-

vidual. As such, the management of concussions does not completely fall within the expertise of any single health care discipline, but instead benefits from the expertise of several different disciplines including, but not limited to, physical therapy, neurology, neuropsychology, and athletic training.

Physical therapists provide a unique contribution to the concussion care management team, particularly in the areas of balance and vestibular evaluation and rehabilitation. Multidisciplinary collaboration is essential in evaluating the appropriateness for a safe return to play. The decision for a student athlete to return to activity can often become convoluted without a structured protocol that considers the health needs of the student athlete first and foremost.

H.R. 5611/S. 2600 would make return-to-activity decisions easier by ensuring school districts have concussion management plans that educate students, parents, and school personnel about how to recognize and respond to concussions. This legislation would also provide student athletes and communities with information about how to prevent and manage concussions, while also assisting in their safe return to academic and athletic performance.

Widely Supported

APTA supports H.R. 5611/S. 2600, along with a number of health care and education groups. Additional organizations who have endorsed the bill include: American Academy of Neurology, American College of Sports Medicine, Easterseals, National Football League, National Basketball Association, Major League Baseball, National Hockey League, National Collegiate Athletic Association, National Council of Youth Sports, National Association of School Psychologists, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Parent Teacher Association, U.S. Soccer Federation, USA Football, Sports & Fitness Industry Association, Safe Kids World Wide, and National Federation of State High School Associations.

Facts About Physical Therapists and Physical Therapist Assistants



Who We Are

Physical therapists are movement experts who help to optimize people's physical function, movement, performance, health, quality of life, and well-being. Physical therapists evaluate, diagnose, and manage movement conditions for individuals, and they also provide contributions to public health services aimed at improving population health and the human experience. Physical therapist assistants are educated and licensed or certified clinicians who provide care under the direction and supervision of a licensed physical therapist. PTs and PTAs care for people of all ages and abilities.

What We Do

After performing an evaluation and making a diagnosis, physical therapists create and implement personalized plans based on best available evidence to help their patients improve mobility, manage pain and other chronic conditions, recover from injury, and prevent future injury and chronic disease. PTs and PTAs empower people to be active participants in their care and well-being. They practice collaboratively with other health professionals to ensure the best clinical outcomes.

Where We Practice

PTs and PTAs provide services to people in a variety of settings, including outpatient clinics or offices; hospitals; inpatient rehabilitation facilities; skilled nursing, extended care, or subacute facilities; education or research centers; schools; community centers; hospices; industrial, workplace, or other occupational environments; and fitness centers and sports training facilities.

Education and Licensure

As of 2016, all PTs must receive a doctor of physical therapy degree from an accredited physical therapist education program before taking and passing a national licensure exam that permits them to practice. Licensure is required in each state (or other jurisdiction, including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands) in which a PT practices. PTAs must complete a two-year associate's degree from an accredited physical therapist assistant program and pass a national exam. State licensure or certification is required in each state (or jurisdiction) in which a PTA works.

American Physical Therapy Association

The American Physical Therapy Association is a national organization representing more than 100,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students nationwide. Our mission is to build a community that advances the profession of physical therapy to improve the health of society.

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Cosponsor H.R. 5611/S. 2600 Today!

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