



**PEDORTHIC
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**Testimony of the Pedorthic Footwear Association
Before the Pennsylvania House of Representatives'
Committee on Professional Licensure Regarding HB 2015**

Wednesday, March 19, 2008

I. Introduction

Good morning Chairman Sturla and Members of the Committee on Professional Licensure. My name is Brian Lagana and I am the Executive Director of the Pedorthic Footwear Association (PFA).

PFA appreciates the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 2015 and its amendments, which, if passed, will provide for the licensure of orthotists, prosthetists, orthotic fitters and pedorthists in the Commonwealth.

PFA is one of only three associations in the world solely dedicated to representing pedorthists and the pedorthic profession. Currently, PFA has over 2,000 members in the U.S. and overseas, including 80 of the approximately 115 pedorthists practicing here in Pennsylvania.

Pedorthics is the design, manufacture, modification and fit of shoes and foot orthoses to alleviate problems caused by disease, congenital condition, overuse or injury. Through PFA's efforts, the practice of pedorthics has become a well-established and recognized allied health profession, with educational standards established by the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics and Pedorthics (ABC) and the Board for Orthotist/Prosthetist Certification (BOC).

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II. Background & Justification

Unlike many interest groups that seek to limit attention from Federal and state governing bodies and regulators, and work toward *lessening* regulations imposed on their constituents, PFA and its members have worked for years to *increase* the recognition of pedorthics at the Federal and state level with the goal of achieving Federal and state oversight of the practice of pedorthics.

The increasing population of elderly and physically challenged individuals who need pedorthic services requires that the pedorthic profession be regulated to ensure the provision of high-quality services, footwear and orthotics. At-risk patients deserve the best care available, and will benefit from the assurance of initial and ongoing professional competence of credentialed and/or state licensed pedorthists practicing in each of the fifty states.

The practice of pedorthics serves to improve and enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities by enabling them to resume productive lives following serious illness, injury, or trauma. Unregulated dispensing of pedorthic care does not adequately meet the needs or serve the interests of the public. In keeping with the reasoning behind state requirements imposed on similar health disciplines, licensure of the pedorthic profession will help ensure the health and safety of consumers, as well as maximize their functional abilities and productivity levels.

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III. PFA's Position & Status of Regulation at the Federal and State Levels

After a lot of effort on the part of PFA, the then-Board for Certification in Pedorthics (BCP – now merged with ABC) and other organizations representing Medicare suppliers, regulatory success has finally been achieved at the Federal level. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has promulgated regulations that will require all providers of Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics and Supplies (DMEPOS) – pedorthists, orthotists, prosthetists and orthotist/prosthetists - to be credentialed by CMS recognized credentialing organizations. For pedorthists, those organizations are the Board for Orthotist/Prosthetist Certification (BOC) and the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics and Pedorthics (ABC).

The CMS regulation is a tremendous step forward at the national level in ensuring quality and safe patient care through qualified practitioners, and maintaining the integrity of the Medicare program in general, and, more specifically as it relates to pedorthists, Medicare's Therapeutic Shoes for Persons with Diabetes benefit (TSD). The TSD benefit has been in place since 1993 with the goal of reducing the instances of lower extremity amputations on diabetic patients through conservative therapeutic and protective shoes and orthotics (inserts). Diabetics are certainly a high risk population, and one deserving the best of care to prevent traumatic and life-altering amputations.

However, not all practitioners treat diabetic patients and accept Medicare assignment, leaving a population of practitioners outside the jurisdiction of Medicare's oversight and its qualified provider requirements. That "gap" has been addressed in eight states thus far and hopefully will be successfully addressed in Pennsylvania as well. State licensure requirements in all states for pedorthists and other DMEPOS suppliers are critical.

PFA has long encouraged the passage of legislation implementing professional licensing requirements for pedorthic practitioners by the individual states. Licensure is currently required in seven states - Florida, Ohio, Illinois, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Arkansas and Alabama. New Jersey provides for optional pedorthic licensure within broader mandatory requirements for orthotic and prosthetic licensure. In addition to Pennsylvania, licensure legislation is currently under consideration in New York and Kentucky.

State licensure ensures that ALL pedorthists, whether they accept Medicare assignment or not, are regulated. This, in turn, ensures that all patients receive uniform, safe and high quality care; that state Medicaid programs and third party payers are reimbursing only to qualified practitioners, thereby maintaining benefit integrity; and that patient access is expanded, since credentialed practitioners are recognized more often than non-credentialed practitioners by third party payers. PFA applauds the Commonwealth for its leadership in assuring quality healthcare by introducing HB 2015 and its amendments.

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IV. Conclusion

States license dentists, members of the clergy, lawyers, fortune tellers (in Maryland) and frog catchers (in South Carolina). It makes good public policy to require healthcare practitioners who have a significant impact on the quality of living of at-risk diabetic patients, and others with chronic foot problems or foot injuries, to be held to a higher, regulated standard. Again, PFA strongly supports the passage Pennsylvania House Bill 2015 and its amendments.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for allowing PFA to provide you with its position on pedorthic licensure today. I would be happy to take questions from the Committee.

The Pedorthic Footwear Association (PFA), founded in 1958, is the not-for-profit professional association which represents the interests of the certified and/or licensed pedorthist and supports the pedorthic profession at large. Through the efforts of PFA, pedorthics -- the design, manufacture, modification and fit of shoes and foot orthoses to alleviate problems caused by disease, congenital condition, overuse or injury - is a well-established allied health profession which makes an invaluable contribution to public health. PFA's mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the certified pedorthist through education; increase the demand for the certified pedorthist's services through marketing; and defend the certified pedorthist's right to practice through government affairs activities.

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