

Senator Danielson, Senator Petterson & the Health and Human Services Committee,

Our names are Jenny Junker and Kylie Sleeth, and we are occupational therapists who own and operate Thrive! Therapy. Thrive! Therapy is a mobile outpatient therapy provider focusing on treating older adults in the Denver metro area. We provide occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech language pathology services along with wellness programming to older Coloradans in their homes or meet them in the community. The proposed bill, SB22-189 Colorado Geriatric Provider Pipeline Program, needs to include occupational therapy students as essential future health care providers for the geriatric population. We are in support of this bill with amendments to include occupational therapy students, along with physical therapy and speech language pathology students.

In May of 2017, the American Occupational Therapy Association, conducted a survey of occupational therapy practitioners (OTPs) in the United States based on practice area. They found 19% of OTPs working in long-term care settings primarily with older adults, 27% working in hospital settings (many with older adults) and 9% working in home health and community-based settings. When taken into consideration, this means around 50% of OTPs work with older adults in their specific employment settings on a daily basis. Our entire career we have worked with older Coloradans and have seen individuals come to us on a stretcher with no movement on one side of their body and leave walking out the door independent in all of their daily tasks able to return to their daily lives. Each and every day, we are impacted by the motivation, dedication, and passion older Coloradans have to be independent and participate in their communities. We have seen lives changed based on the impact of interdisciplinary care through the collaboration of therapy teams including occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech language pathology, nursing, social work, psychologists, and physicians. On top of that, an independent study published in *Medical Care Research and Review* found that occupational therapy is the only spending category where additional hospital spending has a statistically significant association with lower readmission rates for the three health conditions studied: heart failure, pneumonia, and acute myocardial infarction (Roger et. al., 2016). "The findings of this important study highlight just one of the many roles occupational therapy practitioners are playing in improving quality and reducing healthcare costs," said Frederick P. Somers, Chief Executive Officer of the American Occupational Therapy Association. Therefore, occupational therapy practitioners are an essential member of any interprofessional team successfully addressing health care needs, specifically with older adults (Roger et. al., 2016).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our written testimony to support the amendment to add occupational therapy students to this bill. We are in favor of this bill and believe it will support collaboration and interdisciplinary care of older Coloradans which is vital to a holistic approach to provide the best care possible to older Coloradans.

Respectfully,

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References

Rogers, A.T., Bai, G., Lavin, R.A., Anderson, G.F. (2016). Higher Hospital Spending on Occupational Therapy Is Associated With Lower Readmission Rates. *Medical Care Research and Review*, DOI: [10.1177/1077558716666981](https://doi.org/10.1177/1077558716666981)

American Occupational Therapy Association, (2017). Occupational Therapy Fact Sheet. Retrieved from <https://www.aota.org/-/media/Corporate/Files/Advocacy/Federal/Tips-and-Tools/OT-Fact-Sheet-2017.pdf>