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Background Checks for Physical Therapists

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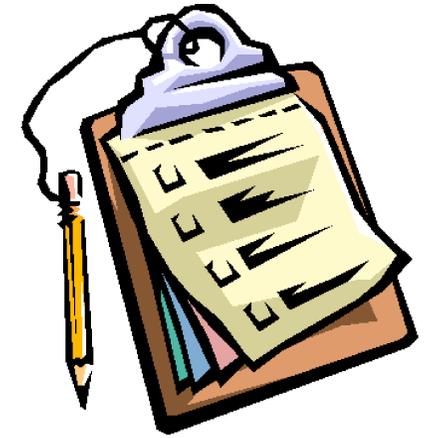
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Senate Bill 633

This bill authorizes the West Virginia Board of Physical Therapy to conduct criminal background checks on physical therapists applying to obtain their license.

Support of Senate Bill 633

This bill would ensure the safety of patients, build the trusting relationship between the professionals and the client, and deter physical therapist applicants from engaging in criminal activities.



Protecting Patients from Possible Threats

- ❖ Crime(s) committed range from embezzlement, falsified documentation, and theft to sexual misconduct. These acts are not condoned in professional settings and serve as a danger when interacting with sensitive information, documentation, and patients.
- ❖ Misconduct resulting in harm to the patient is addressed in the fourth principle of the American Physical Therapy Association's Code of Ethics (2009), stating that "physical therapists shall demonstrate integrity in their relationships with patients/clients, families, colleagues, students, research participants, other health care providers, employers, payers, and the public".

Summary Statement

In conclusion, I support Senate Bill 633 proposing the investigation of criminal background records of West Virginia physical therapists seeking their license. This would protect patients from potential threats, emphasize the building of trust between the physical therapists and their patients, and deter criminal motives in those seeking this profession. The background checks should be implemented in the process in order to continue to maintain a safe and secure environment with a zero-tolerance policy on immoral or criminal behaviors. The community would feel safe and trust these healthcare workers to properly interact and care for the patients they treat. With enough support from members of the healthcare community and patients, this bill has the potential to greatly reinforce the backbone of the physical therapy occupation's goals and code of ethics.

Building Trust between Physical Therapists and Patients

- ❖ Patients would have more trust in physical therapists by knowing that they do not have criminal backgrounds.
- ❖ Any breach in the system could result in the exploitation of sensitive personal information that medical professionals must record before treating the patient.
- ❖ The therapist could improperly treat the diagnosis due to a lack of knowledge or the influence of outside sources such as the habitual usage of drugs and alcohol prior to treatments that are unknown to the administration.
- ❖ As stated by the News Now Staff (2016) working with the APTA, the national physical therapy malpractice lawsuits increased to \$42 million.

Deterring Physical Therapists from Engaging in Criminal Activity

- ❖ The cost of the background check would deter the applicants from criminal activity, as they would not want to waste money and jeopardize their career nor potential income over previous criminal records.
- ❖ According to the Federal Bureau of Investigations (2016), a national criminal record report costs \$18 per individual.
- ❖ A monetary investment towards this career would ensure higher standards for the medical professionals.
- ❖ Professionals that develop poor morals during the job would not be inclined to continue their illegal activities if they had to renew their background checks when they renewed their physical therapy license.