

**ASSEMBLY BILL**

**No. 721**

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**Introduced by Assembly Member Nava**  
**(Coauthors: Assembly Members Adams, Chesbro, Emmerson,**  
**Galgiani, Knight, Niello, and Silva)**  
(Coauthor: Senator Walters)

February 26, 2009

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An act to amend Section 2620 of the Business and Professions Code, relating to physical therapists.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 721, as introduced, Nava. Physical therapists: scope of practice.

Existing law, the Physical Therapy Practice Act, creates the Physical Therapy Board of California and makes it responsible for the licensure and regulation of physical therapists. The act defines the term “physical therapy” for its purposes and makes it a crime to violate any of its provisions.

This bill would revise the definition of “physical therapy,” would authorize a physical therapist to initiate treatment of conditions within the scope of physical therapist practice, and would require a physical therapist to refer his or her patient to another specified healing arts practitioner if the physical therapist has reason to believe the patient has a condition requiring treatment or services beyond that scope of practice.

Because the bill would specify additional requirements under the Physical Therapy Practice Act, the violation of which would be a crime, it would impose a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.

State-mandated local program: yes.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. Section 2620 of the Business and Professions  
2 Code is amended to read:

3 2620. (a) Physical therapy means *examining, evaluating, and*  
4 *testing a person with mechanical, physiological, and developmental*  
5 *movement-related impairments, functional limitations, and*  
6 *disabilities or other health and movement-related conditions in*  
7 *order to develop a plan of therapeutic intervention and to initiate*  
8 *treatment. Physical therapy is the art and science of physical or*  
9 *corrective rehabilitation or of physical or corrective treatment of*  
10 ~~any~~ *a bodily or mental condition of any a person by the use of the*  
11 *physical, chemical, and other properties of heat, light, water,*  
12 *electricity, sound, massage, and active, passive, and resistive*  
13 *exercise, and shall include physical therapy evaluation, treatment*  
14 *planning, instruction, and consultative services. The practice of*  
15 *physical therapy includes the promotion and maintenance of*  
16 *physical fitness to enhance the bodily—movement—related*  
17 *movement-related health and wellness of individuals through the*  
18 *use of physical therapy interventions. The use of roentgen rays*  
19 *and radioactive materials, for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes,*  
20 *and the use of electricity for surgical purposes, including*  
21 *cauterization, are not authorized under the term “physical therapy”*  
22 *as used in this chapter, and a license issued pursuant to this chapter*  
23 *does not authorize the diagnosis of disease.*

24 (b) *A physical therapist may initiate treatment of conditions*  
25 *within the scope of practice of a physical therapist. If at any time,*  
26 *the physical therapist has reason to believe that the patient he or*  
27 *she is treating has signs or symptoms of a condition that requires*  
28 *treatment or services beyond the scope of practice of a physical*  
29 *therapist, the physical therapist shall refer the patient to a person*  
30 *holding a physician and surgeon’s certificate issued by the Medical*

1 *Board of California or by the Osteopathic Medical Board of*  
2 *California or by a person licensed to practice dentistry, podiatric*  
3 *medicine, or chiropractic.*

4 (~~b~~)

5 (c) Nothing in this section shall be construed to restrict or  
6 prohibit other healing arts practitioners licensed or registered under  
7 this division from practice within the scope of their license or  
8 registration.

9 SEC. 2. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to  
10 Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because  
11 the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school  
12 district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or  
13 infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty  
14 for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of  
15 the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within  
16 the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California  
17 Constitution.

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