

PRESS RELEASE

Assemblymember PEDRO NAVA



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Assemblymember Pedro Nava Spearheads Legislation to Increase Access to Health Care Services

AB 721 allows Californians Suffering from Chronic Pain and Injury to Seek Immediate Treatment for Physical Therapy Services

Sacramento, CA —Assemblymember Pedro Nava announced today the introduction of AB 721 to improve access to healthcare services. AB 721 will allow physical therapists to act within their scope of practice and initiate immediate treatment to patients seeking relief from pain and injury without the need for a physician diagnosis.

“When talking about health care in California, access and cost to services are cornerstone issues,” said Nava. “This common-sense measure will afford millions of Californians the opportunity to directly access licensed physical therapists, thereby, avoiding long delays and unnecessary costs associated with back and forth visits to physician offices.”

AB 721 will improve access to rehabilitation services for workers injured on the job, young athletes engaged in school sports and seniors. California physical therapists currently may examine, evaluate and test patients but not initiate treatment. As a result, a patient in need of physical therapy often experiences unnecessary wait times and associated costs before being referred to a licensed physical therapist who is specifically trained in the field of movement, function and health. Additionally, the legislation will reinforce patient safety through direct access by requiring physical therapists to refer patients back to a physician if it is determined that physical therapy is not appropriate for the patient.

“Physician referrals often don’t report the diagnosis or cause of a patient’s pain or impairment, often delaying the patient’s recovery,” said Cheryl Resnik, doctor of physical therapy and president of the California Physical Therapy Association. “Physical therapists are trained to identify why a patient is experiencing specific symptoms and develops a customized plan for care based on an evaluation. AB 721 will allow physical therapists to carry out the required treatment without delay and do what they already are competent to do.”

“When a patient is hurting, there is no need to make them wait for treatment,” added Nava. “Given the difficulties so many Californians face in getting needed care, access needs to be expanded, not limited to allow consumers to seek care directly from a physical therapist. My measure is sensible health care reform that focuses on improving the health of injured patients without the bureaucracy.”

AB 721 already has received strong bi-partisan support in both houses of the Legislature. Assembly members Bill Emmerson (R-Redlands), Wes Chesbro (D-Arcata), Steve Knight (R-Palmdale), Jim Silva (R-Huntington Beach), Anthony Adams (R-Claremont), Cathleen Galgiani (D-Merced) and Roger Niello (R-Sacramento) in addition to Senator Mimi Walters (R-Laguna Niguel) have joined with Assemblymember Nava as co-authors of the bill.

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