

The Certified Athletic Trainers' Fight for State Regulation in California: A Survey of Current National Athletic Trainers' Association Members

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Abstract: California remains the only state without regulation in the form of licensure, registration, or title protection for the athletic training (AT) profession. Athletic Trainers (ATs) have advocated since the mid-1980s only to have legislation vetoed by two separate governors on six different occasions. In the current study, a total of 307 (14.6%) of 2,100 current National Athletic Trainers Association (NATA) members were surveyed regarding lack of regulation in California. Virtually all (98%) supported the need for state regulation and the preponderance (93%) believed it should consist of licensure. Many respondents (78%) indicated that California's non-regulated status negatively impacts the public's perception of the AT profession across the nation. Sixty-eight percent of respondents agreed no regulation of the AT profession negatively impacts ATs accepting employment in the state of California. Lastly, 87% agreed no regulation negatively impacted the safety of physically active individuals in California. Since 2002, ATs in California have supported eight bills related to AT regulation with no success of being enacted. It is the perception of the NATA members surveyed that California needs state regulation, preferably in the form of licensure, for the protection of the health, safety, and wellbeing of physically active individuals. Secondly, licensure would enhance the community's understanding of the critical public health role of ATs. The lack of AT regulation in California should concern advocates of physically active individuals who rely on AT services. These include parents, coaches, school administrators, university leadership, and the general public who seek care from an AT.

Keywords: Athletic trainers, licensure, regulation, California

The Path to California's Regulation of Athletic Trainers

Athletic training is an allied health profession recognized by the American Medical Association responsible for the prevention, examination, treatment, and rehabilitation of emergent cases, as well as acute and chronic injuries (National Athletic Trainers' Association, 2020). The National Athletic Trainers Association (NATA) provides oversight and regulation of

the athletic training profession. Athletic training students (ATS) must graduate from a program approved by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE) and pass a national board exam conducted by the Board of Certification (BOC) to earn their certified athletic trainer credential. The BOC partners with both the NATA and the CAATE for establishing standards for the practice of athletic training and the continuing education requirements of BOC Certified ATs. The purpose of the CAATE is to develop, maintain, and promote appropriate minimum education standards for quality in athletic training programs (ATP). The CAATE academic requirements include a curriculum of courses assessing both universal competencies and athletic training-specific competencies. The universal competencies are embedded in courses such as human anatomy and physiology, biomechanics, nutrition, chemistry, and physics. The athletic training-specific competencies are embedded in coursework and clinical experiences based upon the Standards for Accreditation of Professional Athletic Training Programs. These Standards are used to prepare professional athletic trainers. Each institution is responsible for demonstrating compliance with these Standards to obtain and maintain recognition as a CAATE-accredited professional athletic training program (Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education. Standards for Accreditation of Professional Athletic Training Programs, 2020). Upon successful completion of a CAATE-accredited ATP, candidates are eligible to apply to attempt the BOC exam. Effective 2022, the CAATE will require the professional degree for Athletic Training to be a master's degree.

Traditionally, ATs have cared for athletes of structured teams from the high school, through all professional, team levels and the Olympic levels. Patients receiving care from ATs has expanded to include performing arts, tactical practices (e.g., law enforcement and the military), manufacturing industries, and those in specialty healthcare and sports medicine clinics. Athletic training research has produced professional position statements pertaining to concussion management, athletic activity concerns during inclement environmental conditions, and prevention of external heat illness among other conditions.

The profession of athletic training is regulated in 49 states and the District of Columbia, while California remains the only state with no regulations regarding who can call themselves an athletic trainer and no regulations regarding the scope of practice of an athletic trainer (Post et al., 2019). The overarching objective of regulation is to protect the public from imposters claiming to be athletic trainers. Imposters typically present as an athletic department staff member designated to fill the role of an athletic trainer despite no qualification, or, as a discredited athletic trainer from a different state that seeks employment in California. Regulation of athletic trainers typically occurs through licensure, although a small number of states have title protection or registration. A licensure statute generally defines educational requirements, the scope of practice, supervision delineation, and the mechanism for the public to report a violation.

It has been reported that only 45.4% of high schools in California employed an AT, and 18% of these individuals employed full-time throughout the school year (Post et al., 2019). Even more concerning, this study indicated that 7% of high schools employ an unqualified individual as their AT (Post et al., 2019). These unqualified individuals are directly responsible for providing care to over 54,000 student-athletes (Post et al., 2019). Additionally, nearly 200,000 student-athletes in California participate in athletics at a high school without an AT (Post et al., 2019).

The state of California has long pursued regulation for the profession of athletic training. The initial attempt to achieve licensure was made in the mid-1980s but did not advance just prior to the signature by the governor. After this attempt, opposition to AT regulation caused various iterations of bills to stall in the State Assembly or Senate. Most recently, attempts at title protection stipulate that one calling themselves an athletic trainer would be required to meet academic athletic training standards. Multiple bills have been vetoed by both Republican and Democrat governors since 2002. A recent bill to reach the governor was Assembly Bill (AB) 161 in 2015. AB 161 was an attempt to formally establish title protection for athletic trainers in California introduced to establish title protection for athletic trainers by adding Chapter 2.6 to Division 8 of the Business and Professions Code (*Calif. Legis. Inf.*, 2016). Through the title protection established in this legislation, it would have been deemed unlawful for any person to represent themselves as an athletic trainer, use the title, or use specific terms to imply the person is an AT unless they are certified by the Board of Certification, Inc. (*Calif. Legis. Inf.*, 2016). AB 161 would have made it an unfair business practice to use the title of AT, certified athletic trainer (ATC), or other specified terms to imply they are an ATC. Additionally, the bill would have allowed an individual who has been employed as an AT in the state of California for a period of 20 consecutive years prior to January 1, 2016, and who is not otherwise eligible to use the title of AT, to use that title (*Calif. Legis. Inf.*, 2016).

AB 161 unanimously (80-0) passed the Assembly Floor in September 2015 (Trackbill, 2016). It was vetoed by the governor who stated:

The bill prohibits a person from using the title of AT unless they have received a bachelor's degree and are certified by a national certification body. I vetoed a nearly identical measure last year and continue to believe that the conditions set forth in this bill impose unnecessary burdens on athletic trainers without sufficient evidence that changes are needed. (Trackbill, 2016)

Other bills were vetoed by this governor and his predecessor (see Table 1).

Table 1

Gubernatorial Vetoes of AT Title Protection Legislation

Governor	Party	Year
Schwarzenegger	Republican	2006, 2007, 2010
Brown	Democrat	2013, 2014, 2015

Since California remains the last state to not regulate – in any form – the practice of athletic training, the concern for the patients within the state is warranted. Sufficient evidence does exist demonstrating that changes are needed. A bill that would ensure the ATs who care for their patients are properly trained and educated would result in best practices regarding their health, safety, and well-being. The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of current members of the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) regarding the lack of state regulation of athletic trainers in California and the far-reaching impact it may have on the health, safety, and well-being of the patient, as well as on professional and public opinion.

Methodology

A nationwide survey was developed by the lead author with a series of thematic questions pertaining to the participant's perceptions regarding the lack of athletic training regulation in California (see Table 2). The survey was original to this study and was evaluated for face validity using a small pilot group of current NATA members prior to the start of data collection. These members of the pilot group were not included in the full study and evaluated the survey to ensure the questions were appropriate for the targeted population and purposes.

Table 2

Research Questions Administered in the Survey

1. What is your current membership category within the NATA?
2. Please indicate the highest level of degree earned.
3. Do you currently hold the credential of Certified Athletic Trainer in the United States?
4. How many years have you been a Certified Athletic Trainer?
5. If employed as a Certified Athletic Trainer, in which setting do you practice?
6. If employed in the college or university setting, which role best describes your position?
7. If employed as a Certified Athletic Trainer, in which state or territory do you practice?
8. Have you ever been employed in the state of California as a Certified Athletic Trainer?
9. Are you aware that California remains the only state in the nation that does not require state regulation to practice athletic training?
10. Do you believe California's lack of state regulation in regard to the Athletic Training profession negatively impacts the public's perception of the role of a Certified Athletic Trainer?
11. Do you believe California's lack of state regulation in regard to the Athletic Training profession negatively impacts the public's perception of the role of a Certified Athletic Trainer only in California or throughout the United States?
12. Do you believe California's lack of state regulation in regard to the practice of athletic training negatively impacts the safety and welfare of the physically active population (i.e., high school and intercollegiate athletes) in California?
13. Do you believe California's lack of state regulation in regard to the practice of athletic training negatively impacts a Certified Athletic Trainer's decision to accept employment in the state of California?

14. Does California's current lack of state regulation for the practice of athletic training concern you personally and/or professionally?
15. Do you believe California should require state regulation for all individuals practicing athletic training?
16. If you believe that California should require state regulation to practice athletic training, which of the following types of state regulation do you believe California?
17. Do you feel the National Athletic Trainers' Association is doing enough to support Certified Athletic Trainers employed in California in their effort to achieve state regulation?
18. Optional: Please share any comments/suggestions you feel would benefit the efforts of California BOC Athletic Trainers to achieve state regulation regarding the practice of athletic training?

The survey was forwarded via email to 2,100 current NATA members. Three hundred and twenty-one participants of various membership categories responded to the survey, resulting in a 15% response rate. Of those, 307 completed the survey, ensuring a 14.6% response rate. The highest response rates were from the states of California (27) followed by Pennsylvania (21). Eighty-nine percent of the respondents were board certified athletic trainers (ATC) and 78% identified as Certified-Regular members. Most of the respondents were employed either in the college or university setting (43%) or the secondary school setting (26%). Of those employed in the college or university setting, 60% identified as staff ATs compared to the 22% who reported they held academic positions. A majority of respondents had earned a master's degree (53%). Seven percent of the respondents had earned a doctoral degree. Undergraduate students comprised 8% of the response rate. Regarding years as an ATC, 31% of respondents reported zero to five years followed by 19% reporting six to ten years. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents were employed outside of the state of California. Fifty-three percent of the respondents identified as female. A majority of respondents identified as non-Hispanic (98%) and 95% identified themselves as White. The most common age range was 25-32 years (30%). The University of La Verne Institutional Review Board approved the study.

The survey was conducted through Qualtrics Survey Software, and emails of the current NATA members were purchased from the NATA. An invitation to participate in the survey was disseminated via the member's email address. A reminder survey was sent to all potential participants one week after the initial invitation, and the third and final reminder was distributed five days later. The collection of the participant's responses was anonymous. Participants were provided an electronic procedure and consent form within the invitation as well as an electronic message at the beginning of the survey indicating they understood and agreed to participate in the survey. Data collection occurred over two time periods. Each collection period included the distribution of 1,050 invitations. The first period was completed in February and the second in March of 2015.

The survey (see Table 2) consisted of eight demographic-related questions such as gender and race (see Table 3), level of education (see Table 4), employment status (see Table 5), and BOC standing (see Table 6). Drop-down menus with answers appropriate for each question were provided. There were nine questions pertaining to the respondent's knowledge of the lack of

regulation in California and the NATA's level of assisting California in this process. Answers to these questions were based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'definitely yes' to 'no basis to judge' to 'definitely no.' The final question was optional and prompted suggestions or additional information regarding assisting the effort of California's athletic trainers. Space for a written answer of approximately 100 words was provided.

Table 3*Gender and Race Characteristics of Participants*

Gender and Race Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Male	142	46.71
Female	162	53.92
Race		
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	1.05
Black or African American	7	2.45
Hispanic or Latino	7	2.37
Asian	11	3.85
White	271	94.76

Table 4*Education Characteristics of Participants*

Education Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Bachelor's	93	29.81
Master's	166	53.21
EdD	10	3.21
PhD	11	3.53
DPT	3	.96
Current undergraduate student	26	8.33
Other	3	.96

Table 5*Employment Characteristics of Participants*

Employment Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Colleges and universities	118	43.07
Academic	26	22.41
Staff	70	60.34
Both	20	17.24
Hospital and clinical	26	9.49
Occupational health	6	2.19
Military	1	.36
Performing arts	2	.73
Physician extender	4	1.46
Professional sports	4	1.46
Public safety	1	.36
Secondary schools	72	26.28
Unemployed	10	3.65
Independent contractor	5	1.82
Other	25	9.12

Table 6*BOC Certification Status of Participants*

BOC Certification Status	<i>n</i>	%
Certified-regular	243	77.39
Career-starter	7	2.23
Associate	2	.64
Non-certified student	27	8.60
Certified and non-Certified International	2	.64

Certified Retired	5	1.59
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Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the perceptions of current NATA members about the lack of state regulation for ATs in the state of California and were reported as percentages and values when appropriate. All statistical analyses were performed in SPSS statistical software (version 23.0; IBM Corp, Armonk, NY).

Results

A total of 307 current NATA members completed the survey. Dependent upon responses to specific questions, not all components of the survey were answered by each of the 307 participants. Overall, 75% of respondents were aware the state of California does not have any form of regulation for the practice of athletic training. If a participant indicated a “definitely yes” or “probably yes,” it was considered a favorable response. Of the respondents from the state of California, all were aware that their state lacked any form of regulation for the practice of athletic training. A large percentage of current NATA members surveyed agreed that the lack of regulation of ATs negatively impacts the public perception of ATs with 58% reporting “definitely yes” and 27% “probably yes.” Furthermore, 78% believe the negative public perception occurs not only in the state of California but across the United States as well. When asked if the lack of state regulation negatively impacts the safety of physically active individuals, 87% provided a favorable response.

Regarding California’s unregulated practice for ATs, most respondents agreed that it negatively impacts ATs accepting employment in the state (40% “definitely yes” and 28% “probably yes”). Respondents expressed concern either on a professional level (43%) or both on a professional and personal level (44%) that California remains the last state to require state regulation of ATs.

Respondents overwhelmingly believed the state of California should require a form of regulation for ATs with 98% responding favorably. When separated into non-California and California respondents, the favorable response was 99% and 93%, respectively. Of those that believed California should require state regulation, 93% indicated licensure (96% of non-Californians and 89% of California respondents) should be the required form of regulation.

Lastly, 52% of all respondents reported “no basis to judge” regarding whether they believed the NATA is doing enough to support ATs in California and their efforts to secure state regulation for the practice of athletic training.

Additionally, participants in the study were given the option to share any comments/suggestions they felt would benefit the efforts of California BOC Athletic Trainers to achieve state regulation regarding the practice of athletic training. Nine participants provided comments which are provided in Appendix A.

Discussion

In this study, the perception of current NATA members surveyed determined that a majority (75%) were aware that California remains the only state without regulation for the practice of athletic training and that an overwhelming majority of members were in favor of state regulation (98%). Reasons for the prodigious support include but are not limited to: (a) an agreement that the lack of state regulation negatively impacts the public perception of ATs not only in California but across the United States; (b) it negatively impacts both the safety of the physically active in the state of California; and (c) ATs accepting employment in California. Hence, it is both a professional and personal concern of the NATA members surveyed. Because 49 states and the District of Columbia have a form of regulation regarding the professional practice of athletic trainers, a survey such as this has not been conducted among NATA members. Thus, the survey piloted and completed by the participants in the study is unique in regard to potentially impacting policy.

Leadership executives of the California Athletic Trainers' Association (CATA) advocate that ATs save lives and until the state acknowledges the important role of ATs, patients may continue to be at risk (CATA, 2016). An individual who has not successfully fulfilled the educational rigor and demonstrated clinical competency required by the BOC is less likely to recognize and respond to musculoskeletal injuries and medical conditions, including life-threatening emergencies, than an AT.

Of significant concern to the CATA is that lack of state regulation may contribute to an increase in public danger regarding the prevention, identification, treatment, management, and rehabilitation of the physically active. Eighty-seven percent of the participants in this study believed the lack of regulation of ATs in California negatively impacts the safety of patients. Two general areas in which the public is vulnerable to potential danger are individuals at the secondary school assigned athletic training duties sans qualifications and athletic trainers who have lost their license or Board certification in other states and are willing to relocate to California. Secondary schools without a full- or part-time board-certified athletic trainer typically have the burden of injury care and prevention designated to the coaching staff. There are documented cases in which a non-qualified individual has been designated as the athletic trainer and was expected to fill the role of a skilled clinician (Kelman & John, 2018).

Individuals who have not been able to obtain or have lost professional licensure in other states may gain employment as an AT in California, further degrading the standards of the profession within the state (Licensure Fact Sheet, n.d.). An unethical AT may have a history of medical malpractice or violation of the law. Conceivably, this behavior may not have resulted in a criminal or professional ethics complaint filed, despite a grievous nature that prompted dismissal from a job. Without a legal or ethical complaint, an impropriety may not reach the level of an alarming background check, leaving the prospective California employer unaware of a problematic history. Thus, an AT discredited in a different state who loses their license to practice due to a legal violation could find employment in a private employment setting as an athletic trainer. A majority of respondents in the study (68%) agreed that the unregulated practice of ATs may negatively impact employment rates.

This lack of regulation in California has been of concern within the athletic training profession nationally, with 98% of respondents reporting favorably to requiring a form of regulation for ATs. Encouragement and support for California's efforts have come from colleagues who recognize that a person who is unqualified to practice as an AT in their state could be employed in California. The National Athletic Trainers Association has supported this effort in objective, tangible ways. The NATA has assisted the CATA's legislative advocacy financially with block grants and advised on regulation policy and political action matters. However, 52% of the respondents in this survey reported they have "no basis to judge" if the NATA is doing enough to support the cause for legislation reform in California. A notable gap exists between the efforts of the NATA to support the regulation of ATs in California and its perceived efforts among its members.

Licensure would also allow California ATs to engage with other healthcare providers more completely in public health cases such as the COVID-19 pandemic of 2019. To enhance the volume of available healthcare providers in response to COVID-19, Governor Gavin Newsom issued an open call requesting assistance from healthcare providers currently in practice, retired, or soon-to-be recent graduates from medical and allied health curricula (California Volunteers, 2020; Castillo, 2020). In order to be eligible for COVID-19 emergency medical staffing roles, volunteers were required to have a valid California license in their clinical field (California Volunteers, 2020). Therefore, the ATs in California were unable to contribute their expertise and assistance to their local areas despite a personal willingness to do so. Meanwhile, there were numerous examples of ATs in other states answering similar calls for healthcare professionals and volunteering to screen incoming patients to help prevent the overloading of the nation's hospitals (Fominykh, 2020; Joseph, 2020).

As noted, the CATA plotted two paths for regulation: title protection and licensure. Title protection would establish that anyone claiming to be an AT had met the national BOC standard. Fundamentally, it would intend to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of the patient, but it would not have other important provisions that licensure has, such as a vehicle for public complaints regarding unethical practice. Prior to AB 161, a previous bill (AB 1890) was also vetoed by Governor Brown in 2014. According to the analysis of AB 161, which was vetoed by the governor, the U.S. Department of Labor Division of Practitioner Data Banks received 469 reports of sanctions to athletic trainers, certified and uncertified, from 2000 to 2010 (Bonilla, 2014). In addition, the BOC reported over 2,700 violations of professional practice standards in the five years between 2005-2010 with nearly 300 violations in California, including three sexual offenses (Bonilla, 2014).

The lack of oversight of ATs is a consumer protection problem. The patients with whom these unqualified individuals work, and the employers who hire them, have no way of knowing that these individuals are not qualified to be athletic trainers. The public has no way to determine if someone practicing athletic training is qualified. The public has no way to file a complaint or ask for a practitioner to be investigated and/or sanctioned for incompetence or unethical practice, for example. This creates a huge regulatory gap in the healthcare system. (Bonilla, 2014) Title protection legislation would still allow full recognition of athletic trainers that are afforded licensed practitioners. Specifically, the Medical Injury Recovery Compensation Act stipulates

that liability damages for a patient's non-economic damages as defined in the litigation against a licensed healthcare provider cannot exceed \$250,000 (California Legislative Information, 2020). This provision would not cover an athletic trainer if the legislation solution to regulation was title protection without licensure.

The CATA also reported that it was aware of at least 150 individuals practicing as ATs in high schools and seven in community colleges in California without BOC certification. A study of California Interscholastic Federation schools revealed that 37.1% of California's secondary school athletes participated in schools that did not employ a BOC-certified AT or employed an unqualified healthcare provider to function as an ATC (Post et al., 2019). Despite this, the California Teachers' Federation (CTF) was in strong opposition to AB 1890 in 2015. The CTF argued that individuals already employed in California as ATs would be terminated if the bill passed which could result in thousands of people being instantly fired from their jobs (Bonilla, 2014). The governor was not willing to legislate individuals out of jobs. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016), the employment of athletic trainers is projected to grow by 21% from 2012 to 2022, faster than the average for all occupations. As the public becomes more aware of sports-related injuries at a young age, the demand for ATs is expected to increase most significantly in colleges, universities, secondary schools, and youth leagues.

In 2016, the U.S. Department of Labor announced its Final Rule revising the "white-collar" exemptions from the Fair Labor Standards Act's (FLSA) minimum wage and overtime requirements, resulting in a significant increase to the minimum salary level of \$23,600 to \$47,476 annually (U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, 2016). The average current salary of an AT is \$44,670 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Athletic trainers who have successfully completed a Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE) program and are BOC-certified meet the duties of the learned professional exemption (Atkins & Hughes, 2016). As a result, the minimum salary to qualify for exemption under the FLSA would rise to \$47,476. Because no state regulation currently exists in California that defines an athletic trainer, the state's ATs do not meet the aforementioned criteria. ATs at the college/university, high school, or professional team levels may be considered exempt employees, however, others such as those employed by medical facilities would not be considered exempt. By law, the non-exempt ATs would have to be paid by the hour. They would be required to be compensated, at the very least, minimum wage and overtime pay beyond eight hours a day as well as 40 hours per week. Some ATs have shared that it is common for an athletic trainer to work beyond 40 hours per week, and some as much as 80 hours per week if travel and administrative duties are considered (Mazerolle et al., 2018). On average, an athletic trainer at a Division I National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) institution works 63 hours per week (Mazerolle et al., 2018).

In 2016, California statute enacted a mandatory minimum wage of \$15 per hour by 2022 (The Sacramento Bee, 2016). If ATs in California do not qualify for a learned professional exemption, these changes to existing laws may lead to increased expenditures for school districts already challenged by diminishing local and state budgets. California employers, including state-funded schools, would be required to pay ATs hourly and could not take advantage of the FLSA exemption afforded for BOC-certified athletic trainers. Opposition surrounding an earlier bill, AB 864, claimed that requiring licensure or registration would be cost-prohibitive and an

unfair burden passed onto taxpayers. The bill was vetoed in 2013 despite its design to be cost-neutral, as the expenses associated with licensure would be absorbed by application and renewal fees (Bonilla, 2014).

The California Nurses Association (CNA) also opposed AB 864, citing concerns about over-regulation and a broad reach into related professions (Abrams, 2013). The CNA believed that physical therapists have the same (if not more) rigorous training in the field (Abrams, 2013). While certain similarities exist between the two professions of physical therapy and athletic training, each has its area of distinction and expertise with comparable levels of rigor. With the delineated didactic and clinical education components of CAATE programs preparing qualified students to successfully obtain BOC-certification, few other allied-health professions are as adequately prepared to recognize and respond to emergency medical conditions regarding the physically active individual.

Though ATs in the state of California have found consistent legislative support for regulating their practice as well as national support through their professional organization, California remains the last state to not regulate, in any form, the practice of athletic training. The concern for the patients within the state is warranted. Sufficient evidence does exist demonstrating that changes are needed. A bill that would ensure the ATs providing medical care to a patient are properly trained and educated would result in best practices regarding a patient's health, safety, and well-being.

Conclusions

Despite the long-continued efforts of ATs in California to secure some form of state regulation for the profession, attempts have remained unsuccessful. Many factors have contributed to the lack of success, but the lack of effort on behalf of CATA members is not one of them. Based upon the results of this survey, ATs in California have the overwhelming support of fellow NATA members for state regulation of their shared profession. ATs in California have been vigorously and passionately fighting for better protection of their chosen profession within their state. They have been nationally supported – from simple encouragement by colleagues to utilization of policy experts and financial grants from the NATA. Perhaps, a NATA-sponsored petition advocating for state regulation of ATs in the state of California signed by active and retired NATA members would be of value. State regulation of ATs in California will have a far-reaching impact. It will protect the health, safety, and well-being of the patient, benefit the ATs in the most populated state in the U.S. as well as the profession as a whole, and improve the public's perception of the important, potentially lifesaving role of the AT.

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APPENDIX A

Participants in the study were given the option to share any comments/suggestions they felt would benefit the efforts of California BOC Athletic Trainers to achieve state regulation regarding the practice of athletic training. Nine participants provided comments which are provided below.

Optional: Please share any comments/suggestions you feel would benefit the efforts of California BOC Athletic Trainers to achieve state regulation regarding the practice of athletic training?

Response 1

Aspects of the athletic training field are changing constantly, and I believe that all certified athletic trainers should be responsible for keeping up with these changes if they want to continue working as an athletic trainer. Other states require state licensure, along with turning in CEU's (Continuing Education Units) in order to stay certified. If other states' athletic trainers have to put in extra time to make sure they can still be an athletic trainer I believe it is only fair that athletic trainers in states that don't have any regulations should, too. We will never know all there is to know about the athletic training profession; there is always room for change and growth.

Response 2

I applaud your hard work to achieving licensure. I imagine that as in many states it is being held up by selfish and self-serving organizations. It is sad that California has allowed Athletic Trainers in their state to suffer from poor professional protection when they are so eager to regulate/over-regulate so many others. Good luck to you.

Response 3

Licensure protects the ATCs in your state by regulating the practice of athletic training. This also helps us when other professions, mainly PT, are trying to limit our practices.

Response 4

Formal support from: Parent/Teacher Associations in CA, High School and College Athletic Directors, American Medical Association, Sports Law Lawyers, Risk Management Administrators, College and University Athletic Medical Directors, Hospital Directors, Youth Sports Organizations, and more

Response 5

Don't give up

Response 6

I believe that if all the ATs practicing in California will go and speak directly with their legislature concerning regulation of the practice of athletic training then things can move along faster. Be the best AT that you can and represent the profession the best way that you can by educating everyone about athletic training and athletic trainers through word, deed, and social media. Have some passion about this great profession, smile, be positive about the future of regulation of the practice of athletic training in California and we shall see the results we desire.

Response 7

If California does not regulate the practice of athletic training then they are opening themselves up to legal troubles. Without regulation, anyone can call themselves an athletic trainer with or without credentials and if an un-credentialed individual who identifies as an athletic trainer injures an athlete then if the employer is a public entity then the state could ultimately be held responsible.

Response 8

I feel that being the only state left in the country to not regulate the licensure of athletic trainers is a slap in the face to the profession. Also, the safety of the athletes are at risk as well. Regulation needs to be unified with the rest of the entire country, and the job of athletic trainer needs to be taken just as serious as any other allied healthcare profession.

Response 9

I have not heard why exactly Governor Brown has vetoed the bill even though the CA legislators passed the bill twice.

Response 10

If you are going to be licensed, do not tie in with physical therapy. We have in Delaware and we are at their mercy. I opposed it, but I was the only one.