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Senate Bill 27: Licensure of Athletic Trainers  
Senator Valerie Wiener  
May 14, 2003

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, for the record, I am State Senator Valerie Wiener, representing Clark County, District 3. Today, I appear before you to urge your support for Senate Bill 27, which would allow for licensure of certified athletic trainers.

As you know, I sponsored Senate Bill 357 in the 1999 Legislature. That bill sought licensure for athletic trainers. Based on the "vigorous response" that SB 357 generated, my bill was amended in the Senate. The amended bill required the creation of a committee to develop legislative language that could be introduced in the 2003 legislative session. Senate Bill 27 is the end-product of that committee's work.

The committee, comprising four certified athletic trainers and one member who was an A.T.,C. and a physical therapist, met 17 times for lengthy sessions. I attended the last three sessions. . . as did Legislative Counsel Brenda Erdoes, by telephone . . . to craft the language of SB 27.

You will recall my concerns for bringing this bill to you in 1999. Those reasons have only increased during the past four years. Simply, this is a recognized health care profession that provides an invaluable service to athletes. Yet, there are those who hold themselves out as athletic trainers who are not qualified to address athletic injuries.

What happens when unqualified trainers work with athletes? Minimally, the athlete and his or her health are put at risk for exacerbated or new injury.

\* Without licensure, unqualified trainers will continue to put "at risk" our athletes—the vast majority of whom are children and young adults.

\* Without licensure, we will have no standards to impose on athletic trainers, or those who claim to be athletic trainers.

\* Without licensure, no level of accountability exists for people who know, or don't know, how to render service to athletes who incur injuries.

Many of you might be concerned about "personal trainers." Section 55 of the bill includes references to these individuals, who are also described as "fitness instructors." SB 27 would allow the Board of Athletic Trainers to establish a registry of personal trainers and fitness instructors. The Board would notify people on the registry about public hearings—no fewer than five. At these hearings, the Board would solicit input to develop recommendations for regulation of this profession. On or before January 15, 2005, the Board shall submit to the legislature a report of its findings and recommendations concerning regulation of personal trainers and other fitness professionals.

As a competitive athlete myself, I recognize and appreciate the importance of "accountability." I know that it's important to be able to trust the person I turn to for help . . . in preventing athletic injuries AND in addressing athletic injuries when I incur them. I know how essential it is to get help from qualified people when I am training for fitness or training for a competitive event. I also know, from experience, that it's easy to fall prey to those who hold themselves out as qualified and . . . aren't. We as legislators, have the opportunity with SB 27 to protect the public from unqualified and, sometimes, unscrupulous athletic trainers and fitness professionals.

As I said in 1999—and I want to re-state today—the issue before you is more than just a licensing bill.

It is a consumer protection bill.

It is a public safety bill.

It is a bill that will help us protect our athletes—most of whom are children and young adults—from being treated by unqualified athletic trainers and fitness professionals.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Nevada Physical Therapy Association for its willingness and assistance in working with the Nevada Athletic Trainers Association to draft SB 27. Representatives of both organizations worked long hours during the past several months to reach an equitable compromise. Another thank-you to the Nevada Chiropractic Association for their invaluable input as well.

At this time, I want to introduce you to three witnesses who can help you understand the details of SB 27.

Steve McCauley has been a Certified Athletic Trainer for 14 years. He is the vice president of the Nevada Athletic Trainers Association and chairman of the Legislative Committee.

Marc Paul is the head athletic trainer at the University of Nevada/Reno.

Alfredo Alonzo, who helped us with SB 357 in 1999, also assisted us with SB 27 and helped facilitate the compromise legislation in the form of SB 27.

Again, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I urge you to support Senate Bill 27. This is the one measure that will ensure that the people who are looking after our children and young adults who participate in athletic activities are the right people to have that incredible responsibility.

Thank you.

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