

SUBJECT: Health benefit reimbursement for services of licensed athletic trainers

COMMITTEE: Insurance — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Smithee, Seaman, Isett, B. Keffer, Taylor, Thompson, Van Arsdale

0 nays

2 absent — Eiland, Oliveira

WITNESSES: For — None

Against — Shelton Green, Texas Association of Business

BACKGROUND: Occupations Code, sec. 451.153, specifies qualifications for an applicant for an athletic trainer license. The person must:

- have met the athletic training curriculum requirements of a college or university approved by the Advisory Board of Athletic Trainers and give proof of graduation;
- hold a degree or certificate in physical therapy and have completed a basic athletic training course from an accredited college or university and a required apprenticeship; or
- have a degree in corrective therapy with at least a minor in physical education or health that includes a basic athletic training course and meet the apprenticeship requirement or any other requirement established by the board.

The required apprenticeship consists of 720 hours completed in two years under the direct supervision of a licensed athletic trainer acceptable to the board.

DIGEST: CSHB 584 would expand the list of health care practitioners found in the Insurance Code to include the definition of "licensed athletic trainer," which would mean an individual licensed by the Advisory Board of Athletic Trainers. The bill also would establish that an insured could

select a licensed athletic trainer to provide services scheduled in a health insurance policy that were within the scope of the athletic trainer's license.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2005, and would apply only to a health insurance policy or contract that was delivered, issued for delivery, or renewed on or after January 1, 2006.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

CSHB 584 would add licensed athletic trainers to the list of health care practitioners a patient could select for services, as long as the services were within the athletic trainer's scope of practice and were covered by a patient's health insurance policy. The language of the bill would be permissive and would constitute no mandate.

Licensed athletic trainers have current procedural terminology (CPT) codes that insurance companies recognize for the purpose of reimbursement. These athletic trainers, however, are not among the list of health care practitioners in the Insurance Code. This bill would extend that recognition to licensed athletic trainers and authorize health insurance carriers to pay for their health services.

More than 12 health insurance carriers in the state now reimburse licensed athletic trainers for their services. These licensed athletic trainers work closely with physicians, particularly orthopedic surgeons, and cannot submit for reimbursement unless authorized by a doctor.

The state of Texas currently licenses about 1,200 athletic trainers. Of this group, more than 80 percent work in school settings. They are the first to respond to on-site injuries of student athletes involved in sports competitions. Licensed athletic trainers are highly trained and deserve to be included with other health care providers.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

By allowing health insurers to choose a licensed athletic trainer to provide services, CSHB 584 would be a form of mandated health coverage. Currently physical therapists perform numerous functions for which athletic trainers might be called upon. This bill could create an overlap in scope of services. Also, this bill could result in required reimbursements for services from a health practitioner with insufficient training.

NOTES:

The committee substitute deleted provisions from the bill as filed that would have prohibited a health insurer—either an HMO or a preferred provider—from refusing to contract with an athletic trainer to be in the provider network or to reimburse the trainer for a covered service that a physician requested the athletic trainer perform.