

Please use the following to contact Senator Oppenheimer oppenhei@senate.state.ny.us

We Have Bills!

NYSOTA is excited to report that we finally have legislative bills introduced in both the New York State Senate and the Assembly. And even better, Senator Suzi Oppenheimer of Westchester County has signed on with Senator LaValle as a prime sponsor of the Senate bill.

S.4538 was introduced by Senator Kenneth LaValle, of Suffolk County Long Island, and Senator Suzi Oppenheimer. A.7790 by Assembly member Ronald Canestrari from the Cohoes/Rensselaer/Saratoga area and the Assembly Majority Leader.

We need everyone's help to push these bills up a steep mountain with 2 months to go in the legislative session. Opponents in the past have argued that OT does not do cognitive treatment! Other opponents argue that direct access to OT in non-medical conditions is dangerous to the public! It's time to fight back!

It is critical that we update a practice act that has not kept up with our profession. This legislation corrects serious problems with the regulatory status of the OT Assistant. It adds optometrists as a referral source. And it supports the future role of OT in prevention and wellness.

For a copy of the text of the bill, or, for an update on the status of the bill, please visit <http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/>

We need you to contact:

The **Assembly Higher Education Chair, Deborah Glick**, from Manhattan, at fax number (518) 455-4649 or at glickd@assembly.state.ny.us

The **Senate Higher Education Chair, Toby Ann Stavisky**, from Queens at fax number (518) 426-6857 or at stavisky@senate.state.ny.us

and ask for them to put the OT bill A.7790/S.4538 on their committee agenda for a vote.

Then contact:

Senator LaValle at fax number (518) 426-6826 or at lavalle@senate.state.ny.us
Senator Oppenheimer at fax number (518) 426-6860 or at oppenhei@senate.state.ny.us
Assembly member **Canestrari** at fax number (518) 455-4727 or at CanestR@assembly.state.ny.us

And thank them for sponsoring A.7790/S.4538 and ask them to consider pushing for the bill's passage this year.

Tell the legislators that:

The occupational therapy practice was passed in 1975. Since that time the profession has grown dramatically, especially in early intervention with developmental delays, and in special education. We are also doing a lot more in wellness prevention services, and ergonomics consultations.

Occupational therapy is a natural source of wellness and prevention services since the profession encourages healthy engagement in activities that promote health and a fuller more productive life-style. And the promotion of preventative services is a critical part of this country's health care reform.

Amendments are also proposed to clearly define an occupational therapy assistant and the services that are provided by an occupational therapy assistant.

The current practice of occupational therapy assistants is provided for through an exemption to the practice act. That makes it difficult for the Education Department to regulate the practice of an occupational therapy assistant.

An amendment is made so that an optometrist may refer to occupational therapy. This would bring New York in line with the current practice under Medicare, and allow for better care for people with visual disabilities.

The proposed amendments would allow the delivery of occupational therapy services without a referral for non-medical situations. Special education, community based day programs for the elderly, prevention and wellness services in the community, and work based ergonomics consultations, are examples of populations or settings in which the requirement for referral or prescription creates an undue cost and burden to the client, and an obstacle or delay of services.

Last year the Senate bill reached third reading on the calendar. This is the year to pass this legislation.