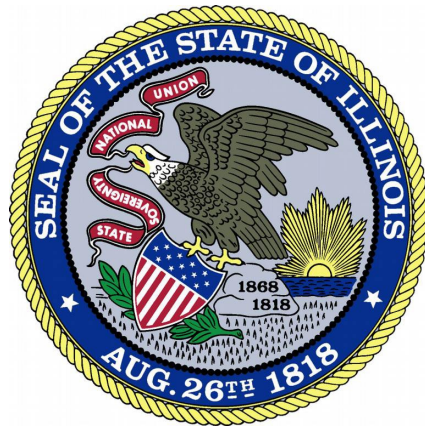


Governor's Office of Management and Budget

Alexis Sturm

Director



Regulatory Sunset Act Report of

Illinois Physical Therapy Act

April 18, 2025

**To the Honorable JB Pritzker
Governor of Illinois**

Governor Pritzker:

As required by Section 5 of the Regulatory Sunset Act (5 ILCS 80/1 et seq.), GOMB facilitated a study with the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR), the agency responsible for oversight of Illinois Physical Therapy Act (225 ILCS 90/0.05 et seq.) (the Act), which is scheduled to be repealed on January 1, 2026. This report provides justification for the recommendation to continue this Act.

GOMB's examination of this Act was conducted considering the factors set out in Sections 6 and 7 of the Regulatory Sunset Act. The following report outlines the work of GOMB's study and details the criteria and data utilized to arrive at the above recommendation.

Respectfully,

Alexis Sturm
Director
Governor's Office of Management and Budget

GOMB Regulatory Sunset Act Report: Illinois Physical Therapy Act

The State of Illinois, acting through the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR or the Department), licenses the profession of physical therapy and therapy assistance pursuant to the Act. Physical therapy is the treatment or evaluation of a person by the use of effective properties of physical measures such as heat, cold, light, water, radiant energy, electricity, sound, and air; the use of therapeutic massage, exercise, and mobilization; and the rehabilitative procedures for preventing, correcting, or alleviating a physical or mental disability.

Regulation of Physical Therapy and other programs provides processes to define minimum standards of competence by practitioners; processes to define minimum standards of professional conduct; processes to ensure maintenance of established standards of competence; and an avenue for consumers to issue complaints when they feel minimum standards have not been followed by a practitioner. The Act states that “[i]t is the legislature’s intent that only individuals who meet and maintain prescribed standards of competence and conduct may engage in the practice of physical therapy as authorized by this Act.” 225 ILCS 90/0.05.

1. License Count and Fee Structure

As of July 2024, IDFPR states that there are 14,711 licenses currently active for physical therapists, 5,795 licenses currently active for physical therapist assistants, and 173 licenses currently active for Continuing Education Sponsors. See the following table for the number of licenses issued for physical therapist, physical therapist assistant, and continuing education sponsors for the fiscal years indicated:

License Type	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Physical Therapist	827	743	663	958	781
Physical Therapist Assistant	319	332	338	279	286
Continuing Education Sponsor	9	8	15	6	7
Totals	1,155	1,083	1,016	1,234	1,074

The following fees are associated with applying for and obtaining licensure as a physical therapist:

License Fees	Fee Amount	Online Payment Option
Application fee	\$100	Yes
License renewal fee	\$30 per year	Yes
Examination fee (both fees required) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Testing service fee• Registration with state board fee¹	\$107 \$485	Yes
Duplicate license fee	\$20	Yes
Continuing Education Sponsor fee	\$500	No
Continuing Education Sponsor renewal fee	\$250	Yes

2. Determining Qualification for Licensure as a Physical Therapist in Illinois

¹ Physical Therapy Licensing and Disciplinary Board

Section 8 of the Act (225 ILCS 90/8) outlines the criteria that the Department is to use when determining qualification for licensure as a physical therapist:

(a) A person is qualified to receive a license as a physical therapist if that person has applied in writing, on forms prescribed by the Department, has paid the required fees, and meets all of the following requirements:

(1) He or she is at least 21 years of age and of good moral character. In determining moral character, the Department may take into consideration any felony conviction of the applicant, but such a conviction shall not operate automatically as a complete bar to a license.

(2) He or she has graduated from a curriculum in physical therapy approved by the Department. In approving a curriculum in physical therapy, the Department shall consider, but not be bound by, accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education. A person who graduated from a physical therapy program outside the United States or its territories shall have his or her degree validated as equivalent to a physical therapy degree conferred by a regionally accredited college or university in the United States. The Department may establish by rule a method for the completion of course deficiencies.

(3) He or she has passed an examination approved by the Department to determine his fitness for practice as a physical therapist, or is entitled to be licensed without examination as provided in Sections 10 and 11 of this Act. A person who graduated from a physical therapy program outside the United States or its territories and whose first language is not English shall submit certification of passage of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the Test of Spoken English (TSE) as defined by rule prior to taking the licensure examination.

(b) The Department reserves the right and may request a personal interview of an applicant before the Physical Therapy Licensing and Disciplinary Board (the Board) to further evaluate his or her qualifications for a license.

In addition, Section 8.1 of the Act outlines the criteria the Department is to use when determining qualification for licensure as a physical therapist assistant:

A person is qualified to receive a license as a physical therapist assistant if that person has applied in writing, on forms prescribed by the Department, has paid the required fees and:

(1) Is at least 18 years of age and of good moral character. In determining moral character, the Department may take into consideration any felony conviction of the applicant, but such a conviction shall not operate automatically as a complete bar to a license; (2) Has graduated from a physical therapist assistant program approved by the Department and attained, at a minimum, an associate's degree from the program. In approving such a physical therapist assistant program the Department shall consider but not be bound by accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education. Any person who graduated from a physical therapist

assistant program outside the United States or its territories shall have his or her degree validated as equivalent to a physical therapy assistant degree conferred by a regionally accredited college or university in the United States. The Department may establish by rule a method for the completion of course deficiencies; and (3) Has successfully completed the examination authorized by the Department. A person who graduated from a physical therapist assistant program outside the United States or its territories and whose first language is not English shall submit certification of passage of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the Test of Spoken English (TSE) as defined by rule prior to taking the licensure examination.

Further, applicants must demonstrate that they have successfully completed the required examination to be a licensed physical therapy professional. 225 ILCS 90/12.

Applicants who fail the qualifying exam three times are required to do remediation, which involves three months of additional training, which is equal to 360 hours, 240 of which are to be clinical, in person, and under the supervision of a licensed physical therapist. Because these applicants are no longer in school but not yet licensed, it is challenging for them to find these opportunities to work within this field because of clinic insurance and liability issues.

Nearby states do not require remediation but allow applicants to continue to test up to the maximum of six times. The Board has discussed remediation issues, including the challenges of training placement and the ability to cross state lines without the step of remediation. IDFPR indicates that the student may benefit from utilizing the same school where they earned their degree for remediation training. The school has a vested interest in maintaining a higher pass rate on the exam. Applicant placement for remedial training is out of scope for IDFPR. The Department's mission is to protect the public and to ensure that competent professionals are licensed to provide services to the public.

3. Equity Concerns

IDFPR stated that some physical therapy applicants may not complete the licensure requirements because of issues around access to training and education. Currently, there are seven physical therapy programs in Illinois that are accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education: Northwestern University, the University of Illinois at Chicago, Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, Midwestern University, Bradley University, Northern Illinois University, and Governors State University.² Of those seven programs, six programs are located in the northeast region of the State. Bradley University is located in the west-central region of the State. The Department also stated that people who speak English as a second language may have difficulty with licensure.

Further study and coordination with the Department, industry groups, and educational institutions is recommended to address barriers to this profession.

4. Agency recommendations to amend the statute

IDFPR is not recommending changes to amend the Illinois Physical Therapy Act.

² Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (<https://www.captonline.org/programs/accredited-physical-therapy-programs/>)

5. Agency efforts to comply with enabling laws

At the time of this study, GOMB is not aware of any compliance issues by IDFPR related to the provisions of the Act.

The Department does state that, “the licensure process for [physical therapy professionals] takes longer than it should, owing to outdated resources, reliance on paper applications, and limited staffing.” More specifically, the Department asserts that limited staffing has led to challenges in processing complaints in a timely manner, enforcement of the Act, and with prosecutions as well.

6. Recent bills introduced by the General Assembly

Senate Bill 1699 was introduced in the 103rd General Assembly by Senator Bill Cunningham as the “Physical Therapy Licensure Compact” to amend the Illinois Physical Therapy Act. SB 1699 focused on the interstate practice of physical therapy to improve public access. During session, the contents of the bill were replaced and later reintroduced as House Bill 4593 in the 103rd General Assembly by Representative Kevin Olickal. However, HB 4593 did not pass out of the Rules Committee.

House Bill 5087 was later introduced in the 103rd General Assembly by Representative Lawrence Walsh, Jr., regarding “Physical Therapy Telehealth.” This bill amends the Act to allow for the provision of physical therapy through telehealth services to address access to care issues, enhance care delivery, and increase the physical therapist’s ability to assess and direct the patient’s performance in the patient’s environment. IDFPR states that HB5087 “offers clarity on the practice of physical therapy through telehealth to expand access to care. This bill was signed into law on August 9, 2024, and became effective January 1, 2025 under Public Act [103-0849](#).”

7. Stakeholder Feedback and Protocols for Physical Therapy Licensure

The Department states that stakeholders may provide input regarding Physical Therapy Licensure through social media, the IDFPR website, public comment segments at meetings of the Board, and by submitting witness testimony to the Health Care Licenses and Licensed Activities committees’ hearings.

8. Public Outreach

IDFPR welcomes comments and suggestions from the public regarding the administration of the professions they regulate. IDFPR offers several channels for the public to offer comments, complaints, and suggestions, including social media platforms and direct communication with profession liaisons and IDFPR’s General Counsel. The public may also attend meetings of the Physical Therapy Licensing and Disciplinary Board.

9. Industry Standards

IDFPR states that the personal qualifications required for this profession are in line with industry standards. All states and territories in which physical therapists practice require licensure or certification and applicants to pass the National Physical Therapy Examination.

10. Public Complaint Resolution

The Department states it has received the following numbers of complaints by fiscal year for the physical therapist profession:

Complaints	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Physical Therapist	39	21	34	33	32

11. Disciplinary Action

The Act provides for numerous avenues by which the Department may take disciplinary action if problems arise in the course of a physical therapy professional's practice, during the provision of their services, or for other specified events. In particular, the Department may:

- Refuse to issue or renew, revoke, suspend, place on probation, reprimand, issue fines not to exceed \$5,000 or take other disciplinary action deemed appropriate with regard to a license for any one or a combination of 26 reasons. 225 ILCS 90/17(1) and (2).
- Suspension of a physical therapy professional's license or other authorization to practice for failure to pay restitution if certified by court order pursuant to 225 ILCS 90/17.5.
- Petition the court for an order instructing the enforcement of compliance with this Act should any person violate its provisions. 225 ILCS 90/18.
- Investigate the actions of any person or group of people who hold a license or claim to hold a license upon proper notification. 225 ILCS 90/19.

12. Conclusion

The Act governs the licensure of physical therapy and therapy assistance professionals in the State of Illinois. The absence of licensing criteria for physical therapy professionals would pose a significant and direct harm to the safety and welfare of the public. The lack of regulation would eliminate the professional standards that practicing physical therapy professionals are held to in the State.

Current evidence does not suggest that the imposition of the State's regulatory standards is such a burden as to outweigh the benefits to the health, safety, and welfare of the people of Illinois in continuing the licensure and regulation of this profession. Consequently, the Act is necessary and appropriate to ensure the health and safety of the people of Illinois.

The Act should be continued to promote and enhance the safety and welfare of the public, without burdening licensees or commerce.