



**American Orthotic &
Prosthetic Association**

Wounded Warrior Workforce Enhancement Act

(S.1021 & H.R. 1904):

Orthotic and Prosthetic Education

Background

The medical conditions (traumatic brain injury, amputation, stroke, etc.) of an increasing Veteran population, and an aging civilian population, have become more complex; and the emerging technologies/devices available to treat these conditions and improve the quality of life of these groups are becoming more sophisticated, and require specialized training (currently orthotists and prosthetists must obtain at a minimum a master's degree from an O&P accredited academic institution and complete a residency program) to gain the experience needed to fit and maintain the devices.

Despite the demand for trained professionals, orthotic and prosthetic programs are not high enough profile and don't generate enough money for universities for them to underwrite sufficient numbers of programs. With a significant percentage of our nation's trained and experienced orthotic and prosthetic clinicians eligible to retire in the next ten years, current O&P accredited academic institutions cannot graduate enough qualified providers to maintain the current workforce, much less the number of clinicians that will be needed to care for the aging population and Veterans with increasing health needs. There is a need to create grants to help universities establish master's degree programs in orthotics and prosthetics, or to expand upon existing institutions' master's programs to ensure care for our Veterans and aging civilian population.

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Recommendation

We would like to work with Congress to secure funding for short-term competitive grants to universities to launch, or expand, the programs which focus on ensuring that future orthotic and prosthetic professionals will have the knowledge and skill base to keep up with the demands of an increasing Veteran population, and an aging civilian population. The relatively small investment needed on the part of the federal government will be repaid through more effective treatment of patients in the VA, Medicare and Medicaid, resulting in fewer co-morbidities and lower costs.

Sen. Durbin (D-IL) introduced the Wounded Warrior Workforce Enhancement Act (S.1021) with the companion H.R. 1904 having been introduced by Rep. Matt Cartwright (D-PA), and these bills authorize \$15 million over three years in competitive grants that will help to assure that American universities can deliver sufficient numbers of well-trained orthotics and prosthetics professionals to keep pace with the needs of our military Veterans, seniors, and others with limb loss or limb impairments.

We urge you to review the Wounded Warrior Workforce Enhancement Act (S.1021 and H.R. 1904) and join as a co-sponsor; and actively advocate for its advancement through the legislative process.

***For more information contact the American Orthotic & Prosthetic Association (AOPA)
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