



February 16, 2026

Minnesota House of Representatives
658 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Representatives:

On behalf of the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA), I am writing to urge your support for HF 82, which modernizes the Minnesota athletic training practice act. This bill is a necessary step in ensuring that athletic trainers can provide the highest standard of care for their patients.

The proposed changes serve to not only clarify the roles of athletic trainers but also empower them to offer more comprehensive treatments within the scope of their education and expertise. The inclusion of activities such as prevention, wellness promotion, therapeutic interventions, and clinical decision-making will undoubtedly enhance the quality of care for their patients. The bill ensures that athletic trainers are properly aligned with physician protocols while increasing their ability to respond to a wider range of conditions.

As the profession of athletic training continues to evolve, it is essential that the legal framework supports the role of athletic trainers in a way that promotes the safety and well-being of all individuals they serve. By updating these provisions, we can better equip athletic trainers to address injuries and conditions, provide timely care, and make necessary referrals when appropriate.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration of HF 82. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Deanna Kuykendall, NATA's Director of Government Affairs, at (972) 532-8803 or deannak@nata.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'A.J. Duffy III'.

A.J. Duffy III, MS, ATC, PT
NATA President



Allina Health
ORTHOPEDICS

March 9, 2026

Members of the Minnesota House and Senate Health Committee

Minnesota State Capitol, 75 Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.,

St. Paul, MN 55105

RE: Support for Updating Minnesota Athletic Trainer's Practice Act

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of efforts to modernize Minnesota's Athletic Trainer Practice Act. As a physician and Senior Medical Director for Allina Health Orthopedics, and on behalf of the physicians within our orthopedic group, I see daily how outdated statutory language limits care team efficiency, patient access, and appropriate utilization of trained healthcare professionals.

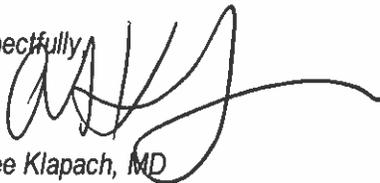
The current practice act has not been updated since 1993 and no longer reflects how athletic trainers are utilized in modern healthcare. Today, athletic trainers are integrated into orthopedic clinics, hospitals, and rehabilitation settings, functioning as key members of physician-led teams supporting musculoskeletal care, rehabilitation, and return-to-function services.

Orthopedic practices face increasing demand, longer wait times, and growing pressure on physician capacity. Athletic trainers help improve access and clinic throughput by managing appropriate aspects of patient care within their education and training, allowing physicians to focus on diagnostic complexity and procedural care. This team-based model improves patient flow and continuity of care while maintaining high standards of quality and safety.

Athletic training education has advanced significantly, with graduate-level preparation and nationally standardized competencies. Modernizing the practice act would not expand scope or reduce physician oversight; rather, it would align statute with current education, practice standards, and care delivery models already in use across Minnesota.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued work to support effective, patient-centered healthcare delivery for Minnesotans.

Respectfully,



Aimee Klapach, MD

Senior Medical Director, Allina Health Orthopedics

952-946-9777 | aimee.klapach@allina.com

Chairs, Health Finance and Policy
Room 477 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

3/9/2026

Chairs and Members of the Health Committee,

I am writing to express my support for the Minnesota Athletic Trainers Act **HF 82**, which updates the thirty-three-year-old Athletic Training Practice Act. Athletic Trainers are healthcare professionals that must pass national Board of Certification Exams and meet annual continuing education requirements. Athletic Trainers are now required to receive a postgraduate degree to practice.

I currently work in a clinical role with Allina Health Orthopedics. I strongly believe that updating the Minnesota Athletic Trainers Act **HR 82** will greatly advance the profession within our state. This will allow me to continue to support our physicians in the clinic setting at the top of my scope of practice by aligning with the athletic trainer educational competencies.

Athletic Trainers are a critical part of any healthcare team. They work together with physicians, nurses, physical therapists, mental health providers and other healthcare professionals to prevent injury, respond to emergencies, and help patients return to activity. Athletic Trainers are trained to treat patients across the lifespan and the scope of practice must be updated to reflect that.

Please pass the Minnesota Athletic Trainers Act this session so that Athletic Trainers can practice at the top of their education and continue to help Minnesota be a leader in healthcare.

Thank you,

Holly Roach, MS, ATC - 1825 Walnut Lane, Eagan, MN 55122

Shane Goblirsch - 10579 Karston Ave NE, Albertville, MN 55301

Nick Tschida, ATC, LAT - 13071 Findlay Ave, Apple Valley, MN 55124

Christian Honnold -6901 Flying Cloud Dr, Unit 331, 55344 Eden Prairie, MN

Teddy Gildersleeve - 37320 Oriole Ave Lindstrom, MN 55045

Mairead Reynolds, MHA, LAT, ATC - 20460 Howland Ave West, Lakeville, MN 55044

Rebekah Hessinger - 530 Cutter Street, Anoka, MN 55303

Shelly Kinney - 9501 Windflower Place, Champlin, MN 55316

B. Todd Keasling, LAT/ATC - 14144 Ash Blvd, Becker, MN 55308

Kelsi Kjolsing - 15975 County Road 34, Young America, MN 55397

Chew Vang - 3030 France Avenue South, St Louis Park, 55416, MN

Joel Kaden - 2438 Barclay Street, Maplewood, MN 55109

Sarah E. Plante - 11980 Zion St NW, Coon Rapids, MN 55433

Samuel B Moore, MEd, LAT, ATC - 13363 Carlingford Ln, Rosemount, MN 55068

Alison Morley Henjum - 5412 Fremont Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55419

Matt Stoneberg - 13480 60th Pl N, Plymouth, MN 55446

Brittany Zweig - 3658 Interlachen Dr NE, Ham Lake, MN 55304

Malorie Sundgaard, 7305 168th Cir NW, Ramsey, MN 55303

Brent Millikin - 7821 West Park Hills Drive, Bloomington, MN 55438

Andrew Haldeman, 1067 Conway Street, Saint Paul, MN, 55106

March 8, 2026

Members of the Minnesota House and Senate Health Committees

Minnesota State Capitol, 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Support for Updating Minnesota's Athletic Training Practice Act

Dear Chairs and Members of the Health Committee:

On behalf of Twin Cities Orthopedics (TCO), one of the largest orthopedic and sports medicine providers in Minnesota, I write in support of updating Minnesota's Athletic Training Practice Act. Athletic trainers are an essential part of our care team at TCO, and modernizing the law that governs their practice is long overdue.

At TCO, athletic trainers work across a variety of settings — embedded within our physician clinics, supporting sporting events and programs for schools and athletic organizations, and deployed on-site at employer locations to support workforce health. In each of these environments, they are trusted members of the healthcare team who help patients recover from injury, prevent new ones, and stay active and healthy. The demand for their services has grown significantly, and the breadth of where and how they practice today looks very different than it did when the current law was written.

Updating the practice act would allow athletic trainers to more fully contribute across all of these settings without unnecessary legal ambiguity. For TCO, this means better care coordination in our clinics, stronger coverage for the athletic programs we support, and more effective employer health programs that keep workers healthy and reduce the burden on the broader healthcare system. The change is good for patients, good for employers, and good for the healthcare workforce in Minnesota.

TCO strongly encourages the committee to support this update. Athletic trainers are a vital part of how we deliver care, and ensuring the law reflects that is an important step forward for patients and providers across the state. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,



Janet Benton, JD, MHA
Chief Operating Officer
Twin Cities Orthopedics
janetbenton@revohealth.com



Chairs, Health Finance and Policy
Room 477 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 9th, 2026

Chairs and Members of the Health Committee,

On behalf of Minnesota Vikings Football, we express our support for the Minnesota Athletic Trainers Act **HF 82**, which updates the thirty-year-old Athletic Training Practice Act. Athletic Trainers are healthcare professionals that must pass national Board of Certification Exams and meet annual continuing education requirements. Athletic Trainers are now required to receive a postgraduate degree to practice.

Athletic Trainers are a critical part of any healthcare team. They work together with physicians, nurses, physical therapists, mental health providers and other healthcare professionals to prevent injury, respond to emergencies, and help patients return to activity. Athletic Trainers are trained to treat patients across the lifespan and the scope of practice must be updated to reflect that.

Please pass the Minnesota Athletic Trainers Act this session so that Athletic Trainers can practice at the top of their education and continue to help Minnesota be a leader in healthcare.

Thank you,


CONNOR R. WHICKER



Chairs, Health Finance and Policy
Room 477 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 9th, 2026

Chairs and Members of the Health Committee,

I am writing to express my support for the Minnesota Athletic Trainers Act **HF 82**, which updates the thirty-three-year-old Athletic Training Practice Act. Athletic Trainers are healthcare professionals that must pass national Board of Certification Exams and meet annual continuing education requirements. Athletic Trainers are now required to receive a postgraduate degree to practice.

Athletic Trainers are a critical part of any healthcare team. They work together with physicians, nurses, physical therapists, mental health providers and other healthcare professionals to prevent injury, respond to emergencies, and help patients return to activity. Athletic Trainers are trained to treat patients across the lifespan and the scope of practice must be updated to reflect that.

Please pass the Minnesota Athletic Trainers Act this session so that Athletic Trainers can practice at the top of their education and continue to help Minnesota be a leader in healthcare.

Thank you,

CONNOR R. WHICKER

1069 ACHILLES DRIVE

ROSEMOUNT, MN 55068





March 11, 2026

Representative John Huot
5th Floor Centennial Office Building
658 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator John Hoffman
2111 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
95 University Avenue W.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Support for HF 82 / SF 962 – Modernizing Minnesota’s Athletic Training Practice Act

Dear Representative Huot and Senator Hoffman,

On behalf of Minnesota United FC, our state’s professional soccer team competing in Major League Soccer, I write to express strong support for HF 82 / SF 962. This legislation modernizes Minnesota’s Athletic Training Practice Act to reflect current education, training, and clinical practice.

Every day, Athletic Trainers (ATs) are on the front line of injury prevention, emergency response, rehabilitation, and safe return-to-play. AT’s manage complex injuries and real-time risks to athletes so they can perform consistently and safely over long and demanding seasons.

Beyond professional athletics, ATs serve a critical role across Minnesota’s youth soccer ecosystem—from community clubs and school-based programs to academies and weekend tournaments—often as the only on-site health care professional available for immediate injury attention, including concussion evaluation and safe participation. Access to AT’s is especially important in Greater Minnesota, where they may be the most readily available health professional in a sports setting.

The proposed updates bring Minnesota in line with national education standards and with the policy direction of many states that define the AT’s service population as an individual/patient/physically active person, rather than limiting care to “athletes.”

For a professional sports team like ours, the bill clarifies and codifies what ATs already do: triage and treat emergent and acute injuries, manage rehabilitation, and make referral decisions in collaboration with our team physicians—all while reducing ambiguity that can slow care in time-sensitive environments.

For youth and community sports, especially outside the metro, the bill expands practical access to qualified care—so the same licensed professional who is present on the field can provide prevention, education, and early intervention without artificial barriers created by outdated terminology.

Thank you for your consideration and for your work to keep Minnesota athletes and families healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

Sara Daggett
EVP, Chief Legal Officer & Head of Public Affairs

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Department of Orthopedic Surgery

February 22, 2026

Chair, Health Finance & Policy
State Office Building – Room 477
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair and Members of the Health Committee,

I am writing to express my support for the Minnesota Athletic Trainers Act HF 82, which updates the thirty-three-year-old Athletic Training Practice Act. Athletic Trainers are healthcare professionals that must pass national Board of Certification Exams and meet annual continuing education requirements. Athletic Trainers are now required to receive a postgraduate degree to practice.

As a head team physician for University of Minnesota varsity athletics, I see the invaluable role our team athletic trainers have in caring for these athletes. Their expert level of care not only includes in game sidelining coverage, but also extends to the daily treatment of our athletes. Additionally, I work alongside several excellent athletic trainers in my clinical practice. Without their expertise, my practice simply would not function.

Athletic Trainers are a critical part of any healthcare team. They work together with physicians, nurses, physical therapists, mental health providers and other healthcare professionals to prevent injury, respond to emergencies, and help patients return to activity. Athletic Trainers are trained to treat patients across the lifespan and the scope of practice must be updated to reflect that.

Please pass the Minnesota Athletic Trainers Act this session so that Athletic Trainers can practice at the top of their education and continue to help Minnesota be a leader in healthcare.

Thank you,



Jacob J Ristow, MD
Assistant Professor
Department of Orthopedic Surgery
University of Minnesota



Waseca Junior & Senior High School

1717 2nd St. NW Waseca, MN 56093

Phone: 507-835-5470

Fax: 507-835-1724

Mr. Justin Johnston, Principal Mr. Craig Kopetzki, Assistant Principal Mr. Jake Nelson, Dean of Students

Chair, Health Finance and Policy
Room 477 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Monday, March 9th, 2026

Chair and Members of the Health Committee,

I am writing to express my support for the Minnesota Athletic Trainers Act HF 82, which updates the thirty-three-year-old Athletic Training Practice Act. Athletic Trainers are healthcare professionals that must pass national Board of Certification Exams and meet annual continuing education requirements. Athletic Trainers are now required to receive a postgraduate degree to practice.

In my work with high school athletics, I have seen the impact Athletic Trainers have on the health and safety of our students. They are often the first healthcare professionals to evaluate an injury, providing immediate care and guiding the next steps for treatment and recovery. Their training and expertise make them an essential part of keeping student-athletes safe.

Athletic Trainers are a critical part of any healthcare team. They work together with physicians, nurses, physical therapists, mental health providers and other healthcare professionals to prevent injury, respond to emergencies, and help patients return to activity. Athletic Trainers are trained to treat patients across the lifespan and the scope of practice must be updated to reflect that.

Please pass the Minnesota Athletic Trainers Act this session so that Athletic Trainers can practice at the top of their education and continue to help Minnesota be a leader in healthcare.

Thank you,

Joseph J. Hedervare, Jr., CAA
Activities Director, Waseca Junior Senior High School
hedj@waseca.k12.mn.us
507-837-5534

Home Address:
1553 Eagle Ridge Street NE
Waseca, MN 56093

Chair, Health Finance and Policy
Room 477 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 8, 2026

Chair and Members of the Health Committee,

I am writing to express my support for the Minnesota Athletic Trainers Act **HF 82**, which updates the thirty-two-year-old Athletic Training Practice Act. Athletic Trainers are healthcare professionals that must pass national Board of Certification Exams and meet annual continuing education requirements. Athletic Trainers are now required to receive a postgraduate degree to practice.

Our AT's are vital to our lives. The work and support they give allows us to continue to do what we love in our sports. Our AT's don't only care for the athlete's bodies, but care for our athletes as people and enhance their lives in a multitude of ways!

Athletic Trainers are a critical part of any healthcare team. They work together with physicians, nurses, physical therapists, mental health providers and other healthcare professionals to prevent injury, respond to emergencies, and help patients return to activity. Athletic Trainers are trained to treat patients across the lifespan and the scope of practice must be updated to reflect that.

Please pass the Minnesota Athletic Trainers Act this session so that Athletic Trainers can practice at the top of their education and continue to help Minnesota be a leader in healthcare.

Thank you,

Mike Carroll, Head Women's Hockey Coach at Gustavus - 17508 Deerfield Dr. SE, Prior Lake, Mn. 55372

Tom Thorkelson, Assistant Coach – Track and Field – Gustavus Adolphus College St. Peter, MN

Laura Kelly - Head Women's Basketball Coach – Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, MN

Brendan Huber, Head Coach – Cross Country, Assistant Coach Track and Field – Gustavus Adolphus College St. Peter, MN

Jacob Voss, Head Coach – Volleyball – Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Joseph, MN

John Carlson, Head Coach – Swimming and Diving – Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, MN

Mikinzee Salo, Assistant Coach – Men's Tennis – Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, MN

Nissa Fell, Certified Nurse Practitioner, St. Peter, MN

Jane Lalim, Academic Advisor in the Academic Support Center – Gustavus Adolphus College, Belle Plain, MN

Julie Groneworld, Parent of collegiate athlete - St. Peter, MN

Debra Swanberg, Parent of high school and collegiate athletes - Le Sueur, MN

Jorgen David Jeremiason, Former High School athlete – St. Peter High School, Current Gustavus Adolphus College Student - St. Peter, MN

Benjamin Kell - Member of the Gustavus Adolphus College Swim Team, Interested in pursuing Athletic Training as a profession - Minneapolis MN

Aiden Cole Carlson, Member of the Gustavus Adolphus College Swim Team, Interested in pursuing Athletic Training as a profession - Moorhead, MN

Riley Zebroski, Member of the Gustavus Adolphus College Women's Golf Team, Watertown, SD

Elizabeth Moore, Member of the Gustavus Adolphus College Women's Soccer Team, Omaha, NE

Jordan Burris, Member of the Gustavus Adolphus College Men's Soccer Team, Interested in pursuing Athletic Training as a profession - Zimmerman, MN

Gavin Stodden, Member of the Gustavus Adolphus College Track and Field Team, Interested in pursuing Athletic Training as a profession - Cannon Falls, MN

Reegan Lindholm, Member of the Gustavus Adolphus College Track and Field Team, Interested in pursuing Athletic Training as a profession - Owatonna, MN

Justine Holm, Alumni Member of the Gustavus Adolphus College Women's Soccer Team, Athletic Trainer, Graduate Assistant Winthrop University - Shakopee, MN

Stella Anderson Moye, Member of the Gustavus Adolphus College Swim Team - Inver Grove Height, MN

Oliva Duncan, Member of Gustavus Adolphus College's Track and Field Team, Savage, MN

Chairs, Health Finance and Policy
Room 477 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 9, 2026

Dear Chairs and Members of the Health Committee,

I am writing in support of **HR 82**, which modernize Minnesota's Athletic Trainer Practice Act. I offer this perspective as a licensed Athletic Trainer practicing in a clinical setting and as a supervisor responsible for the oversight of athletic trainers, but also care delivery, workforce utilization, and patient access within orthopedic services.

Minnesota's Athletic Trainer Practice Act has not been updated since its origination in 1993. While athletic trainers were historically viewed primarily within traditional athletic settings, today we are fully integrated into clinical environments including orthopedic clinics, hospitals, rehabilitation services, and occupational health programs. In these roles, athletic trainers function as key members of physician-led care teams, supporting musculoskeletal evaluation, treatment implementation, rehabilitation progression, injury prevention, and return-to-function care.

From an operational and supervisory standpoint, outdated statutory language creates unnecessary barriers that limit the ability to deploy athletic trainers efficiently and consistently at the top of their education and training. Orthopedic practices are facing increasing patient demand, longer wait times, and growing strain on physician capacity. Athletic trainers are well positioned to help address these challenges by managing appropriate aspects of patient care, improving clinic throughput, and supporting continuity of care—allowing physicians to focus on diagnostic complexity, procedural care, and higher-acuity decision-making.

Athletic training education has advanced significantly since 1993, with entry-level preparation now at the graduate level and nationally standardized competencies in evidence-based practice, clinical reasoning, and interprofessional care. **HR 82** does not expand scope beyond these established competencies, nor do they reduce physician oversight. Rather, they align statute with current education, training, and modern team-based care models already in use across Minnesota healthcare systems.

Modernizing the Athletic Trainer Practice Act through **HR 82** will support patient access, improve care team efficiency, and strengthen physician-led musculoskeletal care delivery across the state.

Please pass the Minnesota Athletic Trainers Act this session so that Athletic Trainers can practice at the top of their education and continue to help Minnesota be a leader in healthcare.

Respectfully,



Suzanne Bloomquist, MS, LAT, ATC

Clinical Services Supervisor

Allina Health

Chair, Health Finance and Policy
Room 477 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

2/22/2026

Chair and Members of the Health Committee,

I am currently an orthopedic surgeon with UMP physicians, past medical athletic for Gopher Athletics, and team physician for several Gopher sports since 1986. In addition, I am past medical director for our MHealth outpatient clinics, and current dyad lead for the MHealth-Fairview Musculoskeletal service line. All of these positions have allowed me to interact with athletic trainers on several levels, over decades of the changing face of Health Care. Athletic Trainers have become a key asset in our delivery of efficient and effective musculoskeletal patient care, as well as helps with preventative care, in both team sport as well as outpatient medical care settings.

Athletic Trainers have become a critical part of our healthcare team. They work together with physicians, nurses, physical therapists, mental health providers and other healthcare professionals to prevent injury, respond to emergencies, and help patients return to activity. Athletic Trainers are trained to treat patients across the lifespan and the scope of practice must be updated to reflect this.

Therefore I am writing to express my full support for the Minnesota Athletic Trainers Act **HF 82**, which updates the **thirty-three-year-old Athletic Training Practice Act**. Athletic Trainers are healthcare professionals that must pass national Board of Certification Exams and meet annual continuing education requirements. Athletic Trainers are now required to receive a postgraduate degree to practice. They deserve to have legislation that reflects their expanding role in their educational requirements, and their current position in our health care system.

Please pass the Minnesota Athletic Trainers Act this session so that Athletic Trainers can practice at the top of their education and continue to help Minnesota be a leader in healthcare.

Happy to discuss as desired.

With Respect,



Elizabeth A. Arendt, MD

Professor and Vice Chair
University of Minnesota Department of Orthopedic Surgery
Physician Dyad Lead for the MHealth-Fairview Musculoskeletal Service Line

Personal address: 122 Stonebridge Rd., St. Paul, MN. 55118

Chairs, Health Finance and Policy
Room 477 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

3/9/2026

Chairs and Members of the Health Committee,

I am writing to express my support for the Minnesota Athletic Trainers Act **HF 82**, which updates the thirty-three-year-old Athletic Training Practice Act. Athletic Trainers are healthcare professionals that must pass national Board of Certification Exams and meet annual continuing education requirements. Athletic Trainers are now required to receive a postgraduate degree to practice.

This is my 15th year working as an athletic trainer in the secondary school (high school setting) as well as working in a clinical role within Twin Cities Orthopedics. TCO utilizes athletic trainers in many different ways, and we play a vital role in the care of not only the student athletes we support in the various schools TCO partners with. But also, in the overall patient care that we provide within the clinic setting as well. I firmly believe that this update of the Minnesota Athletic Trainers Act **HF 82** will go a long way in advancing the profession of athletic trainers within the state of Minnesota!

Athletic Trainers are a critical part of any healthcare team. They work together with physicians, nurses, physical therapists, mental health providers and other healthcare professionals to prevent injury, respond to emergencies, and help patients return to activity. Athletic Trainers are trained to treat patients across the lifespan and the scope of practice must be updated to reflect that.

Please pass the Minnesota Athletic Trainers Act this session so that Athletic Trainers can practice at the top of their education and continue to help Minnesota be a leader in healthcare.

Thank you,

Eric Risberg

12363 Zea St NW, Coon Rapids, MN 55433

Community Voices

How Minnesota can win with the help of athletic trainers

I treated athletes at the Olympics in Milan, but Minnesota law constrains trainers like me from helping meet broader health care needs.

by **Annika Pasch**

02/25/2026



Athletes participate in a biathlon training session at the 2026 Winter Olympics in Anterselva, Italy, Feb. 6, 2026. In this year's games, Annika Pasch was the first-ever athletic trainer for the U.S. biathlon team in the Olympics. Credit: Mosa'ab Elshamy/AP file photo

Sports are ingrained in the American identity, from the NFL and NHL to the rising prominence of the WNBA and PWWL.

This passion takes [center stage](#) during the Olympic Games. Athletes from all over the world compete, yet the U.S. is the most successful nation in Olympic history with its number of gold medals. While our athletes' talent is undeniable, a significant part of that success comes from a uniquely American advantage: the athletic trainer.

The concept of an athletic trainer is rare on the international stage; Canada and Ireland are the only other nations with a similar model. Yet, in the U.S., we are increasingly the first point of care for everyone from youth athletes to professionals, providing a level of accessibility that other countries lack.

[Related: Does Minnesota have the second-most athletes of any state on the Olympic team?](#)

I have the privilege of serving as the first-ever athletic trainer for the [U.S. Biathlon](#) team. Biathlon is a grueling sport that combines the high-intensity cardio of cross-country skiing with the precision of rifle shooting. My position was created knowing how valuable an athletic trainer would be as the main health care provider.

During the World Cup and 2026 Winter Games in Milan so far this year, I often called myself a “jack of all trades.” In my role, I am the primary medical provider on the ground for eight elite athletes. I act as a first responder, triage coordinator and sports medicine lead, ensuring the team stays injury and illness free. Working in tandem with our team physician based in Utah, I manage everything from nutritional supplements and daily health check-ins to the prevention of minor injuries that can derail years of training. I act as our team physician's eyes and ears on the ground.

And the results speak for themselves. This year, the U.S. men's relay team finished fifth, the best Olympic finish in our program's history. While the U.S. did not medal in biathlon, the gap for the future is closing. Our athletes tell me they are the healthiest they have ever been because a dedicated athletic trainer relieves the stress of navigating their own health care, allowing them to focus entirely on their performance.

‘Olympic-level’ care shouldn't be a luxury

But this “Olympic-level” care shouldn't be a luxury reserved for the world's best. Athletic trainers specialize in preventing and treating chronic injuries and medical conditions, understanding health far beyond bones and muscles. I've implemented general health screenings for our junior athletes to catch allergies and chronic issues early. We are facilitators for the entire health care system, experts at triaging needs and directing patients to the right specialists.

As a proud alumna of Gustavus Adolphus College, I call Minnesota home. But current Minnesota law constrains athletic trainers like me. Our state's practice act hasn't been significantly updated since 1993, when I was just 3 years old. It limits my ability to only treat athletes, even though my education, training and board certification are based on providing care to patients throughout their entire lifespan.

[Related: Sports specialization is putting children's health at risk, trainers say](#)

To my knowledge, we are the only profession in Minnesota in which a practice act defines a patient population this way. Minnesota is in the minority. Forty-one other states define patient populations as individuals, patients or physically active persons. While the medical field and our education have leaped forward in the last three decades, our regulations are stuck in the past.

Today, athletic trainers work in high school athletics, colleges, sports medicine clinics, military bases and warehouses, yet we face unnecessary hurdles when helping patients in these settings. At a time when health care access is a crisis in both rural and urban Minnesota, it makes sense to give patients access to more skilled providers.

The Minnesota Legislature has the opportunity this year to modernize our scope of practice, recognizing the master's-level education and clinical expertise that modern athletic trainers possess. I am practicing at the highest level of sports medicine on the world stage. But now that I am home from Milan, the law prevents me from helping a neighbor or a friend who wants to exercise without pain.

Minnesota needs to reduce the hoops that active, healthy people have to jump through. We need more access to care, not more 30-year-old red tape.

Annika Pasch is athletic trainer and medical coordinator for the U.S. Biathlon team. She lives in Minnesota.