



**Ben Aguila, PT, DPT**

Candidate for Delegate

I would like to seek your support to represent New Jersey as a Delegate for the 2021-2023 House of Delegates (HOD). Blessed to have 20 years' experience as a PT, I have practiced in a multitude of settings including Adult Health Day Care, hospital based PT, home health, multidisciplinary clinics, outpatient orthopedics before laying roots, raising a family and opening a PT private practice clinic in NJ.

As a UMDNJ TDPT student, my awareness of the importance of advocacy and active engaged membership in the APTA grew tremendously. The faculty mentorship and APTANJ community helped mold me as a clinician and I appreciate their hard work and effort, to be the shoulders I now stand on. What they made seem routine, I now know, were hard-won victories. Our robust PT body of knowledge, direct access, and our updated Practice Acts have made me realize that it is my duty to be ever striving to advance the PT profession. They all continue to influence my professional and moral compass on how to move my practice and the PT profession ever forward.

My professional journey includes a tapestry of experiences and shifting cultures: as an immigrant, novice clinician, staff/director position, post grad student, and PT practice owner. Being a private practice owner for the last ten years has made me aware of the myriad of pressures that clinicians and PT practices can face and the simultaneous challenges of remaining sound professionally, ethically, and financially. At the same time, my position as an adjunct Instructor for the Rutgers North DPT program, as well as interactions with the student body from the nine NJ PT and PTA schools, made me acutely aware of the student debt loads that the next generation of PTs are facing.

Determined to be an advocate, I sought out and was blessed to serve as a 2019 NJ Alternate Delegate. There I saw firsthand the complexities and nuances it takes to pass motions that steer the future of the PT profession. Leading up to the HOD, I became aware of a planned rescinding/deletion of a guideline that protected internationally educated PTs. This guideline

was created to help reduce the risk of unfair, unethical, and illegal treatment by employers that may harm the public, the immigrant PT, and the PT profession.

Despite initial pushback, by the hard work of all of us in the NJ Delegation, we garnered initial support on the HOD floor from NY, SC, HI, and OR that persuaded enough components of the House to vote to retain the document. Though I am not an elected 2020 NJ Delegate, I am still very much engaged in the efforts of this 2020 HOD to update and modernize the guidelines.

I would like to close my position statement with an experience I shared with PT students. At the 2018 Spring Conference in Kean University, I got to know a Seton Hall student who shared the financial stresses all SPTs face. This interaction informed and spurred my successful initiative at the next APTANJ business meeting for the student APTANJ membership fees to remain at \$99. After the business meeting, a Rutgers North student shared with me:

“I am glad that you are here for us!”

I replied: “You are welcome, but remember, I am here today advocating out of gratitude to the legacies laid down by the PTs who came before me. I do what I can now, so this PT profession of ours will still be there for you guys coming next. I can’t wait for you to finish, so that you can join me, and I hope one day, to pass the advocacy baton to you.”

This is the same motivation, energy and ideals I wish to offer to the APTANJ members as a Delegate. I thank you for your consideration to represent NJ in the House of Delegates.