



Chairwoman Anielski, Vice-Chairman Hambly, Ranking Member Holmes, and Member of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on behalf of the Ohio Chapter of the American Massage Therapy Association on House Bill 717. My name is Jennifer Cull, and I am the President of the AMTA-Ohio.

The mission of AMTA-Ohio Chapter is to promote the practice of licensed massage therapy, provide meaningful personal and professional growth opportunities, encourage health and wellness while being the go-to organization for our members and communities.

Proper licensure and oversight are imperative for the profession of massage. Currently, Ohio is the only state that chooses to license massage therapists and yet still allows unlicensed massage. Ensuring that all practitioners have the proper training and are following prescribed health and safety procedures is vital, not only from a healthcare perspective, but also from a public safety perspective. The loophole in the current licensure system allowing for unlicensed massage opens the door to illicit activity under the guise of providing massage services. There is no oversight authority to ensure that unlicensed practitioners are not breaking the law or are practicing in a safe environment. In the last year alone there have been several high-profile incidents in Westerville, Toledo, Columbus, and elsewhere where people claiming to be practicing unlicensed massage, were actually engaging in prostitution and human trafficking. Closing this loophole and enabling oversight authority of local governments are necessary steps to fight against these illicit practices.

The aim of HB717 is very much in line with this goal. There are several changes to the bill that would bring its language in line with modern massage therapy terminology, practices, and techniques. We are working with the sponsor to achieve those changes and look forward to continuing those efforts, and the work of ensuring that all practitioners of massage therapy have the requisite qualifications and training necessary to practice safely and effectively.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

Jennifer Cull, LMT
President, AMTA-Ohio