

Dear Representatives of the House Commerce and Labor committee,

As a Licensed Massage Therapist in the state of Ohio, I would like to express my support of House Bill 374. House Bill 374 would eliminate a loophole within Ohio's statute pertaining to massage therapy licensing that currently allows non-therapeutic massage.

I co-own one of the 22 massage therapy schools legally operating in the state of Ohio. Since 1994 we have graduated many who have become successful licensed massage therapists. We are proud of them and of their contributions as massage therapists.

We also have had those who did not graduate and others who graduated but were unsuccessful obtaining their license. These people who did not complete their education or who were unable to successfully pass the licensing exam can legally and proudly do "relaxation massage," unregulated by the medical board or any other agency responsible for public safety.

To be clear, these non-licensed individuals are performing the same techniques as licensed massage therapists, but do not have to meet the educational and safety requirements prescribed by the State Medical Board.

For over 100 years, the State Medical Board has licensed massage therapists who practice in the state. Unfortunately, a loophole currently exists in Ohio law that allows individuals to perform massage, as long as these individuals do not call what they are doing "massage therapy" or advertise their practice as "medical" or "therapeutic massage."

At best, individuals who are taking advantage of the loophole are treating their clients without proper training and oversight, putting their client's health and safety at risk. At worst, individuals are taking advantage of the loophole in the massage therapy law to open venues that offer "relaxation massage" that are no more than fronts for human trafficking and prostitution. House Bill 374 will close an important loophole that human traffickers use to exploit and carry out sex trafficking.

House Bill 374 will enable law enforcement to root out those taking advantage and it will also enable the State Medical Board to refer those who are engaged in inappropriate activity to local law enforcement. Under current law, the State Medical Board has no recourse to investigate anyone purporting to offer non-therapeutic massage and law enforcement has big barriers to pursue them.

Finally, House Bill 374 will clarify, modernize and standardize township ability to regulate massage establishments, similar to the authority that cities have, and have recently been implemented in several cities in the state.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my thoughts on House Bill 374, and I strongly encourage your support to help make Ohio safer by closing this dangerous loophole.

Diane Sater

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