

Good afternoon. My name is Jennifer Cull and I have been a massage therapist for 21 years. I am currently a contracted massage therapy instructor and program manager at The Dayton School of Medical Massage for 11 years. Our company has 5 campuses in the State of Ohio; Dayton, Cincinnati, Columbus, Lima, and Cleveland. I had the responsibility of writing the massage therapy curriculum that has been in use, at all of our campuses, for the past three years. In our great State of Ohio, we were the first in the nation to license the profession in 1915 and are considered an integral part of healthcare here.

How many of you have received a massage before? Was that individual who got you in the chair or the massage table, licensed to practice in our state? Did you even know to ask if they were? How many people would know to even ask? Within minutes of you showing for your appointment you more than likely got undressed and let someone massage your near naked body without knowing their experience, education, or qualifications? This IS the primary issue. We would not go to a physical therapist, gynecologist, or dentist if they didn't have a license. Why is massage different?

With the exception of three states in the nation, ALL have since written legislation to regulate massage therapy and only those with those qualifications are permitted to practice massage therapy. Ohio is the ONLY state that permits both licensed and unlicensed individuals to massage. The lack of education, oversight or accountability from any regulatory body, and protection of the public are, obviously, some inherent problems with this model in Ohio. We have a system in place for people to obtain their licensure, so the creation of such is not necessary, as I have noted it already exists in our state.

In Ohio, we are proud of our relationship with The State Medical Board of Ohio, the entity that regulates our profession, and carry that as a badge of honor. In order to apply for licensure with the state, we must complete 350 hours in Anatomy and Physiology, 350 hours in massage theory and practicum, 25 hours in business, 25 hours in ethics, and 50 hours left up to each school to balance the education in order to complete the 750 hours necessary. A complete FBI & State background check must also be done with a person applying for licensure. The student in massage therapy school must pass a near-national exam called the Massage and Bodywork Licensing Exam (MBLEx). If a person lacks education, then, they have failed to be able to prove their competency in massage therapy at all. How do we know that they have the knowledge, skills, or ethical values in order to provide a safe treatment for the people on their tables?

Unfortunately, Ohio has several pressing issues that pose a threat to our residents. The reason for regulation is to provide protection to the public. We have vulnerable people in the state going for massage, unknowingly, putting their physical health at risk by being under the hands of an untrained person, a person that has failed to show their competency in education, including contraindications and ethics. What would happen if a person received a massage from an unlicensed individual and injured, or their safety was threatened? Who would you call? It would have to be a civil suit. However, if you receive a massage from a licensed massage therapist there is a method of reporting such injury or safety violation. Said person would contact the State Medical Board and file a complaint. The medical board would follow up with that complaint and that particular individual has a risk of losing their license and even prosecution for not following the laws set in place for our practice of Massage Therapy.

As a massage therapy instructor, I have seen all too many times a person signs up for massage therapy school, drops out, and begins practicing massage anyway, calling it relaxation - which is the loophole Ohioans face with our current system. Even in one case a dropout student used a picture from the school classroom as their advertisement for massage. People were unaware that this person had not finished massage school, did not have the knowledge and skills necessary, and risking the welfare of the person on the table. The State Medical Board has also told us that massage therapists are the only licensee under the medical board that they perpetually have a problem with not

showing up for hearings, why? Because, unfortunately, even if they lose their license, they can continue to practice massage without a license, even though they have been found by the medical board to be incompetent to do so.

Every massage that is given by a licensed massage therapist draws on our medical and clinical knowledge of the body, pathology of conditions and diseases, physiological effects of massage, positioning of the patient on the table, and ethics, regardless of the goals of the client. For the client that wants 'relaxation', we must know their medical history in order to provide a safe massage, even for a stress reducing massage. Stress itself is a medical diagnosis that is coded with a diagnostic ICD-10 code. So, even those without a license, are practicing medicine with their relaxation massages because every technique and touch done is intellectual touch. The patient that is or has congestive heart failure, high blood pressure, PTSD, anxiety, low back pain, surgery, taking medications, or unexplained muscle pain is who we see, just to name a few of the conditions. Each of these conditions require a background and proven competency in education to set up an effectively safe session, even if their outcome goal is relaxation.

I ask you to move HB374 from your prestigious committee to the House floor where it may be voted on. This bill is written to provide protection to the public through untrained individuals. If that is not enough to move this bill, then consider the element of human trafficking.

Ohio has one of the highest national rates of human trafficking and what we are sure of is the number one location for human trafficking can be found in 'massage parlors', performed by 'masseuses' in Ohio. Both of these terms are antiquated and have since been co-opted by prostitution, however, the general public is unaware. They see massage and are either, willingly or unwillingly, supporting human trafficking when they visit these locations. Often the locations of these massage parlors are in place, often within shopping centers or shopping strips.

With the passing of our bill, the proper authorities will now have the tools they need to investigate a suspected location without the long, drawn-out process that is current practice. With the passing of this bill, the State Medical Board of Ohio will have the authority to act on complaints for those that practice without a license. At the current time, they have zero regulation over unlicensed people and their hands are effectively 'tied'. This bill will change the way we view massage in the state and will educate the public that the person that massages them must have the proper education and knowledge in order to do so, and if they have a complaint about their therapist or session, they will continue to have a method of reporting that individual.

Please consider moving our bill out of committee and on to the floor so it may be voted on. Make a difference and give the tools necessary for those fighting human trafficking. As a massage therapist, I shutter everytime a client acts inappropriate because they thought I would be one of those masseuses to give them a happy ending. As massage therapists, we are perpetually at risk of having a client solicit us, regardless of gender or sexual orientation. By passing this bill you will also help over 12,000 therapists in the state to educate the public that we are healthcare and not sex workers. Massage therapy and prostitution are not any relation to one another. Unfortunately, these unlicensed massage parlors confuse the general public and put the general public at an unnecessary risk for their health AND safety.

Thank you very much for your time and I thank you in advance for considering moving HB374 out from committee.