

FUTURELIFENOW

791 E McMillan St
Cincinnati, Ohio 45206

May 25, 2021

Re: HB 81

To: The Honorable Dick Stein, Chair, House Commerce and Labor
Committee

Cynthia M. Allen

Certified Feldenkrais Practitioner^{CM}
Senior Trainer, Movement Intelligence
cynthiaallen@futurelifefenow.com

Dear Chair Stein and members of the Committee,

I would like to begin my testimony with clear support for any law which can reduce the rate of sexual slavery. I was sexually abused as a very young girl and understand the pain and suffering that comes through sexual dominance. It is abhorrent and should be stopped whenever possible. ***I truly appreciate the work you are doing to try and make an important difference.***

Larry R. Wells, MDiv, MSW
Neuro Linguistic Programming
Master Practitioner, Trainer and Consultant
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I would also like to support massage therapists in being protected. They are at risk because of the misuse of the term massage by the slave trade.

I have been a Guild Certified Feldenkrais Practitioner^{CM} for 20 years now, but my professional background started in wellness, occupational medicine and ambulatory care. I have provided consulting services to hundreds of physicians, managed urgent care centers as well as started and ran physician practices. Why is this relevant?

I do understand the slippery slope of sexual misconduct. In urgent care centers, we had regular obscene phone calls. These would be attempts to get female staff to describe what was included in a physical examination. There were hints of stalking with scared female staff. Male patients would schedule appointments with female doctors for some hope of sexual contact.

I also owned a holistic health practice and contracted with massage therapists. I know firsthand that we needed to take extra screening steps to keep them safe and even have staff on hand to protect them if needed when a new, unknown male patient had scheduled.

restoring you to your potential

I would like to contrast this to my own practice as a Feldenkrais® Practitioner. I began my practice somewhat tentative and concerned about male clients because of my own personal history and what I had seen as a health care manager. Yet in my 20 years of practice, I have not had one inappropriate phone call. No client has ever tried to procure sexual services from me.

In fact, once online scheduling became available, I took appointments from unknown male clients without any prescreening of any type and saw them by myself where no one was available to provide protection if needed. Why would I feel this was a safe practice?

I think the answer lies in:

- 1) The Feldenkrais Method® is relatively unknown so people come through word of mouth for a specific mobility challenge.
- 2) People arrive knowing that they will stay fully clothed. Almost all descriptions of the work include a statement about staying clothed.
- 3) We use movement over touch. For the purposes of your consideration, I would say we are more akin to yoga and yoga therapy than massage. Professionally, we could certainly argue over the differences, but you would not be very uninterested in that minutia.
- 4) The type of touch is not stroking. It could be hand to skin – but it would be an arm or the face because the client is fully clothed. We do not use oils or any kind of lubricant to make the touch more sensual. We do not have people strip down – even to shorts. We only ask that people dress comfortably for movement.
- 5) We work with people in standing, sitting, kneeling. We watch them walk or reach or get up and down from the chair or floor. We ask them a lot of questions to raise their own awareness. Movement is our approach—touch is sometimes a part of that process, but it has a distinctively different quality than massage.

Given that we are clearly not massage, you may wonder why our small band of Ohio Feldenkrais practitioners are so insistent on obtaining an exemption from this bill. Because the definition of massage in the statute is so broad (and includes touch and movement), we need an exemption so it is clear that it doesn't apply to the practice of the Feldenkrais Method. Our national guild has worked tirelessly to keep legislators and the Massage Therapy board clear on what we do. As a result, we are exempted or excluded from massage licensure requirements in most states (including Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin and others.)

The language in this bill appears to apply only to massage therapists, but there have been enough mixed messages in some of the hearings that I remain concerned that if this bill passes without an exemption for Feldenkrais Practitioners, such as the one already granted to Reflexologists, it could be later used as a means for inappropriate regulation of the Feldenkrais Method® by the state medical board. Reflexology is clearly more of a massage technique, albeit localized to the foot, than we would ever be confused to be.

In summary:

- Massage therapists are not trained in the Feldenkrais Method. What we do is movement reeducation.
- Feldenkrais Practitioners are not trained in massage therapy.
- I have never had a client come to me thinking they would be massaged.
- Feldenkrais Practitioners have never had the challenge of being associated with prostitution or the work as a substitute for sexual pleasure.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony. I am sorry I am unable to testify in person, but I do have a full practice and my income is very important to my family. And I value my clients and want to meet their needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Cynthia Allen", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Cynthia Allen,
Guild Certified Feldenkrais Practitioner
Senior Trainer in Movement Intelligence