

HB 81

House Labor and Commerce Committee

May 24, 2021

Chair Stein, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on House Bill 81, a bill to revise laws governing massage establishments and massage therapy.

I am concerned that HB 81 could be interpreted in a way that would limit my right to practice as a teacher of the *Feldenkrais Method*® of somatic education (movement education) in Ohio. To assure that this won't happen, the bill needs language that clarifies that the Feldenkrais Method is excluded from the definition of massage. Such an exemption will not interfere with the ability of this bill to address the significant problems of prostitution and human trafficking. In most of the states that regulate massage therapy, there are exemptions of *Guild Certified Feldenkrais Teachers*® from massage therapy licensure requirements.

A list of certified teachers of the Feldenkrais Method is readily available to all from the Feldenkrais Guild® of North America, which actively enforces ethical and professional standards. I completed the four-year training in 2001, and I have been re-certified annually since 2001, staying current with continuing education requirements. Of particular relevance here, the organization's rules forbid behaviors that constitute sexual impropriety, and Feldenkrais teachers must refrain from engaging in a sexual relationship with any student, client or trainee while in a professional relationship with that person.

The Feldenkrais Guild of North America has had and will continue to enforce effective regulation of professional and ethical standards of practice by its members. These apply equally to work done with individual clients and with groups of clients. Working with groups (having 'classes') is a very important of my work and it is essentially the same as work done with individuals. I think this highlights the fact that it is something very different from massage.

An important part of my own work is a class I've been teaching for 8 years now at The Cleveland Institute of Music. These *Awareness Through Movement*® lessons help the young musicians enrich their experience of nuances and possibilities in their movement, helping them get more benefit from their instrumental instruction. Increased awareness also helps them to safely maintain their regime of long hours of practice. The school and these students are very clear that the *Feldenkrais Method*® is not 'massage' or 'therapy', nor is it competing with them. The students learn observational skills that help them both in the practice room and on stage.

I hope you will amend HB 81 to add an exemption for people who practice movement education and whose adherence to the training, competency and ethical standards of their respective professional organizations can be readily documented. Uncertainty about this is, I can assure you, an unpleasant burden. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Russell Hall, GCFT

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