

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 a resident of Westerville Ohio who teaches The Feldenkrais Method® of somatic education and The Alexander Technique which are both forms of movement education. I have been qualified in both methods since 1987. In 1998 I returned to Ohio and, have since, taught both private and group lessons all over the state. This includes ongoing classes at Otterbein University in the Department of Theater and Dance as well as the Health Sport Science Department. I have also been hired as a guest teacher at several other universities around the state.

I am concerned that HB 81, though extremely important to combat criminal activity under the guise of legitimate massage therapy, may affect my right to practice The Feldenkrais Method® and the Alexander Technique. A certified Feldenkrais teacher requires a minimum of 800 hours of study followed by appropriate continuing study. Alexander Technique teachers complete 1200-1600 hours. Teachers of both methods must adhere to strict standards of practice and a code of ethics. These methods are practiced worldwide.

Both Feldenkrais® and Alexander use a wide variety of skills to create a safe atmosphere for learning, including verbal and hands-on instruction as well as demonstration and experiential learning to guide students to better understand their patterns of movement and thus, improve posture, agility and function, or to avoid or recover from injury.

Though somatic movement studies like The Feldenkrais Method® and The Alexander Technique make use of some hands-on guidance, they are very different from massage and have very different trainings. The bill is designed to

solve problems with human trafficking and other illicit activity related to the practice of massage. The Feldenkrais Method has never been associated with or used as a front for such activities. Feldenkrais teachers must fulfill training and certification requirements and comply with ethics policies. If they don't, they would lose certification and would not be eligible for the proposed exemption.

I would ask that you amend the bill so that they are included as an exemption on HB 81 along with Reflexology. This is how many other states have handled similar circumstances. The American Massage Therapy Association and all other members of the Federation of Therapeutic Massage, Somatic Practice and Bodywork Organizations support proper exemptions for the Feldenkrais Method and other movement education professions.

It would be an extreme hardship for me as well as my students if I were not permitted to practice my work in Ohio. I appreciate your time and consideration in this matter. Please feel free to contact me with any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,
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