

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 writing on behalf of the Feldenkrais Guild of North America (FGNA). FGNA has eight Guild Certified Feldenkrais Teachers® in Ohio, and HB 81 could affect their right to practice the Feldenkrais Method® of somatic education.

Guild Certified Feldenkrais Teachers use movement and attention to bring about increased awareness and improved functioning through experiential learning. Since HB 81 is intended to regulate the practice of massage therapy, we request that the bill be amended, so it is clear that it does not apply to Feldenkrais® teachers and others who do not practice massage therapy.

We understand that it is important to update the massage therapy licensure requirements in Ohio to combat criminal activity that is taking place under the guise of legitimate massage therapy. However, if the proposed definition of massage therapy is interpreted to apply to the practice of the Feldenkrais Method® of somatic education, it would impose unfair and unnecessary requirements on our certified teachers, whose training and practice is completely different than that of massage therapists. Furthermore, there has been no allegation of criminal activity taking place in Ohio under the guise of the practice of the Feldenkrais Method.

Therefore, FGNA requests that Section 1 of the bill be amended by adding an exemption to Sec. 4731.15 (F) of the Revised Code, for persons who:

- (a) use touch, words, and directed movement to deepen awareness of existing patterns of movement as well as to suggest new possibilities of movement; and
- (b) are recognized by or meet the established standards of either a professional organization or credentialing body that represents or certifies the respective practice based on a minimum level of training, demonstration of competency, and adherence to ethical standards.

Similar amendments have been supported by the US Trager Association, the International Somatic Movement Education and Therapy Association, and the Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy Association of North America, and similar language has been adopted in other states, with support of the American Massage Therapy Association and other members of the Federation of Therapeutic Massage, Bodywork and Somatic Practice Organizations.

Exemptions for the practice of the Feldenkrais Method are in effect in most states that regulate the practice of massage therapy, including Massachusetts, Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin.

The Feldenkrais Method is effective for those seeking to improve posture, movement and function. It is held in high regard by professionals in other fields, and has been the subject of extensive research.<sup>1</sup> Feldenkrais® Awareness Through Movement® classes and Functional Integration® lessons are used by children, seniors, athletes, musicians and people with special needs and neurological conditions. Some lessons include gentle, non-invasive, and non-corrective touch, to guide attention and promote learning. (See <http://www.feldenkrais.com>)

FGNA and its predecessor have developed and enforced internationally recognized accreditation and certification standards for the Feldenkrais Method since 1977. Only Guild Certified Feldenkrais Teachers and authorized trainees can use FGNA's registered service marks, including Feldenkrais®, Feldenkrais Method® and others. Teachers who are not certified would not be eligible for the proposed exemption.

Massage licensure requirements are not appropriate for Feldenkrais teachers. As stated in our Standards of Practice, the Feldenkrais Method is an educational system and is not massage. It does not pose a risk to public safety. Certified teachers have undertaken a minimum of 800 hours of specialized training that is completely different from the curriculum for massage therapy. Teachers are required to adhere to FGNA's Standards of Practice, Code of Professional Conduct and Grievance Protocol, and fulfill continuing competency requirements and renew certification annually.

Thank you for considering our request to amend HB 81. Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,



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<sup>1</sup> Hillier S, and Worley A. The Effectiveness of the Feldenkrais Method: A Systematic Review of the Evidence. Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine. 2015, Article ID 752160. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2015/752160>