



Senator Andrew O. Brenner – 19th District
Senate Health Committee
February 24, 2021
Senate Bill 55 – Sponsor Testimony

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for hearing sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 55, which will revise massage therapy law to protect the massage therapy profession and prevent human trafficking.

Senate Bill 55 is a redraft of Senate Bill 105 from last general assembly, however, it does include some changes recommended to us by the Physical Therapy Association as well as the reflexologists. Ohio requires a license for massage therapy, but allows massage to be performed without a license as well. This loophole in current law enables non-licensed individuals to perform massage as long as they do not specifically call it “massage therapy” or advertise their practice as “medical” or “therapeutic massage”. These non-licensed individuals are performing the same techniques as licensed massage therapists, but do not meet the education and safety requirements prescribed by the State Medical Board of Ohio. It is worth nothing that House Bill 442 from the 133rd GA did, among other changes, lower the number of hours for massage therapy licensure to 600 hours.

Sadly, we have seen these non-licensed establishments used as venues for human trafficking and prostitution in our great state. Ohio is ranked fourth worst in the nation for human trafficking. According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, illicit massage and spa businesses are the number one venue for sex trafficking in America. As we have seen in numerous articles in our papers, human trafficking is happening right here, in our own backyards. I have linked here, a few articles that show the prevalence of human trafficking within non-licensed massage establishments. I encourage you to peruse them.

[\(http://www.fox19.com/2019/02/01/investigation-underway-green-township-massage-parlors/\)](http://www.fox19.com/2019/02/01/investigation-underway-green-township-massage-parlors/)
 [\(https://www.thisweeknews.com/news/20180814/worthington-police-massage-parlor-raid-related-to-human-trafficking-investigation\)](https://www.thisweeknews.com/news/20180814/worthington-police-massage-parlor-raid-related-to-human-trafficking-investigation) [\(https://www.nbc4i.com/local-news/westerville-massage-parlor-shut-down-during-police-investigation-20180403063737565/1096353104\)](https://www.nbc4i.com/local-news/westerville-massage-parlor-shut-down-during-police-investigation-20180403063737565/1096353104)
 [\(https://www.daytondailynews.com/local/washington-twp-massage-business-manager-indicted-for-promoting-prostitution/EDZ27KROO5DA5MTLMK6QZ24VMA/?fbclid=IwAR1Iz8wFc3tJeSHEUajSKpVbxdTcLbICz2JkRQaVXEJ0euWrPgy5d-7Zb3k\)](https://www.daytondailynews.com/local/washington-twp-massage-business-manager-indicted-for-promoting-prostitution/EDZ27KROO5DA5MTLMK6QZ24VMA/?fbclid=IwAR1Iz8wFc3tJeSHEUajSKpVbxdTcLbICz2JkRQaVXEJ0euWrPgy5d-7Zb3k)

Senate Bill 55 will do the following:

- Standardize terminology regarding massage therapy and individuals authorized to perform massage therapy
- Provide regulation and oversight prescribed by the State Medical Board
- Grant regulatory authority regarding massage establishment regulations to townships as municipalities have done under Ohio’s “home rule law”
- Exempt reflexology and reflexologists from requirements

The purpose of this legislation is to streamline the State Medical Board, law enforcement, and townships' abilities to hold bad actors accountable, while preserving the integrity of the massage therapy profession and protecting vulnerable individuals from being trafficked. Lastly, the following individuals and groups have voiced their support for the legislation and its past iterations; the American Massage Therapy Association, Attorney General Dave Yost, Abolition Ohio, The Ohio Township Association, Citizens for Community Values, the Reflexology Certification Institute, and the Ohio Physical Therapy Association.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to give sponsor testimony on such an important bill as Senate Bill 55 and I would be happy to answer any questions you have at this time.