

7 March 2021

By email only to: [shuffman@ohiosenate.gov](mailto:shuffman@ohiosenate.gov)

The Honorable Stephen A. Huffman, Chair  
Members of the Health Committee  
1 Capitol Square  
Ground Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chair Huffman and Members of the Health Committee:

On behalf of the International Somatic Movement Education & Therapy Association (ISMETA), I write to you regarding SB55, a bill proposed to revise laws in OH governing massage establishments and massage therapy. ISMETA currently has two Registered Professional Members in Ohio, and SB55 as written, could affect their right to practice somatic movement education and therapy.

Somatic movement education and therapy encompasses postural and movement evaluation, communication and guidance through touch and words, experiential anatomy and imagery, and movement patterning. These practices are applied to everyday and specialized activities for persons in all stages of health and development. The purpose of somatic movement education and therapy is to enhance human processes of psychophysical awareness and functioning through movement learning.

We understand and fully appreciate the importance of updating requirements for massage therapy licensure in Ohio to support the profession of massage therapy and in some cases, to protect against criminal activity.

Unfortunately, the new definition of massage proposed in this bill, could be interpreted to apply to the practice of the Somatic Movement Education and Therapy, which would unfairly impose unnecessary requirements on our current and future Ohio registered professional teachers and practitioners, whose training and practice is completely different than the training for and practice of massage therapy.

ISMETA requests that Section 1 of the bill be amended, by adding an exemption to Sec. 4731.15 (F) of the Revised Code. We request this exemption language to be included:

“persons who use touch, words, and directed movement to deepen awareness of existing patterns of movement as well as to suggest new possibilities of movement; and 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.”

This is the same exemption language that is supported by other professional organizations including the US Trager Association, the Feldenkrais Guild of North America, and the Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy Association of North America. 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 from massage therapy and bodywork licensure requirements for registered professional members of ISMETA, somatic movement educators and therapists, are in effect in most states that regulate the practice of massage therapy. States where proper exemption language exists include, 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.

ISMETA teachers and practitioners use movement, breathing, touch, and attention to bring about increased awareness and improved and new movement patterning through experiential learning. Our professional members exist all over the country and world, practicing safely and without incident of harm to the public.

Massage licensure requirements are not appropriate for somatic movement educators and therapists. If you would like to see our educational requirements, professional standards, and ethics code you can visit our website: [www.ismeta.org](http://www.ismeta.org)

Thank you for your time and attention considering our request to amend HB 81. If you have further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Mary Abrams, RSME

Government Relations Consultant

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