

Elisabeth Contadino
Ohio Senate Health Committee
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Senate Bill 55 - Interested Party

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on Senate Bill 55.

My name is Elisabeth Contadino and I live in Cincinnati. About 20 years ago after working many years as a Licensed Independent Social Worker, I recognized the importance of the relationship between mind and body and felt that the way I was working was incomplete without somehow addressing it in a deeper and more integrated way. I then decided that I wanted to practice movement education, commonly referred to as somatic education, and realized that I would need to become licensed as a massage therapist in order to legally practice in OH. So that is what I did. While massage therapy was interesting it was not what I wanted to do and is not what I am doing. After getting my massage therapy license I went on to study several specific modalities including Trager Approach which is what I primarily practice with my clients.

Trager Approach was conceived and developed by Dr. Milton Trager who was first trained as a physiotherapist and later as a physician. He used his approach with his patients and not until the late 1970s when he was in his late 60s, did he start training others in his method. Currently there are approximately 1,000 Trager practitioners world wide and about 220 in the United States. In Ohio there are 14 practitioners. All, except for a few, hold licenses to touch as massage therapists, occupational therapists or nurses. Among the few are a retired university dance instructor, a yoga instructor, and a cooking instructor. Throughout the United States, we also have psychotherapists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, chiropractors, choreographers and dancers who have been certified as Trager practitioners. In fact, one of our instructors, Michael Lear, an instructor of yoga instructors, was featured in a cover article of American Massage Therapy Journal for the work he did teaching Trager Approach concepts to physical therapists in post-tsunami Sri Lanka. Another of our instructors, Roger Tolle, worked as a choreographer and dancer in New York before he devoted himself to the practice, teaching, and further development of Trager Approach. Deane Juhan, whose anatomy and physiology book for practitioners of all modalities utilizing touch is used world wide and has been translated into numerous languages, is also a Trager instructor.

The Trager Practitioner training program includes 226 class room hours and 180 hours of fieldwork. After certification practitioners must take 96 hours of advanced classes over the next four years, as well as receive annual tutorials for the next ten years in order to maintain their certification. Often after becoming certified, practitioners choose to assist in trainings as a way to enrich their learning. There are also advanced training programs for those who want to go on to become tutors and instructors.

The United States Trager Association has a formal Code of Ethics & Conduct which is provided to all its members. There is no history of any complaints of misconduct or harm done by Trager Practitioners that have been brought to any state board or the United States Trager Association Board. Nor are the United States Trager Association or Trager International aware of any sex workers masquerading as Trager Practitioners.

Trager only fits Ohio's definition of massage in that it involves touch. It is fundamentally different from massage in that the intent of massage is to fix something, whereas Trager is about working with the neurological system through a process of education to bring about greater awareness and experience of one's body and to develop greater ease of movement. It does not involve particular techniques but is a creative application of specific principles that Dr. Milton Trager identified. Another thing that differentiates a Trager practitioner from a massage therapist is the quality and intent of touch. A Trager practitioner uses a very soft hand with which to communicate a sense of presence and safety and to use as an instrument with which to feel into the various connections and layers of tissue within the client's body. As the practitioner becomes aware of what is occurring within the the client, the practitioner introduces various movements into the client's body. These movements invite the client to know and learn that he is capable of replicating these new, freer, easier, and more pleasant patterns of movement. Although Trager Approach is not a therapy, one of the benefits of the brain learning these new patterns is that there is often a marked improvement in various symptoms of physical problems. Dr. Milton Trager originally developed his method while working with children who had polio. Trager Approach has been very helpful for individuals with various neurological problems such as cerebral palsy, stoke, and Parkinson's as well as strained or tense muscles, and a variety of other problems and ailments. Because the client's body is never challenged and is always supported, the client is able to transition into a calm state where the body and mind can function optimally to bring about homeostasis.

Each Trager session is very individualized. The practitioner is always working in response to what the client is presenting during each particular moment. In some ways it can be compared to an intricate dance in which the music varies. A session will start out with a health history report so the practitioner is aware of any known physical vulnerabilities, problems, and limitations the client may have. Often clients will report something that they would like to have changed. With most clients there is some off the table movement exploration before and/or after the time the practitioner works with the client on the table. The movement exploration may take a variety of forms. It may be initiated by something the practitioner has observed about the client or something the client is curious about or, the client wants to hurt less. The practitioner creatively introduces suggestions for exploration that are congruent with that particular client's view about her body and comfort with movement. During the time while the client lies receptively on the table, the practitioner communicates through touch. There are frequent pauses in which the client is given time to integrate the new information provided by the movements that the practitioner introduces to the clients body. Many of the movements are often experienced as wavelike movements. There are also pauses in which the practitioner may make an observation about what she notices about the

client's body or will ask the client to observe what he is experiencing in his body. Sometimes the observations are verbalized and sometimes not. Before the client gets up from the table, the practitioner will help the client with the transition back to expanding his awareness of his physical environment, the practitioner, and the flow of time. This is when the practitioner may ask the client what she has just experienced that she wants to be able to recall in the future. There are various ways the practitioner can facilitate the client's recall. Once off the table, the client may revisit some of the earlier movement exploration and make comparisons between before and after the table work. Before the client leaves, the practitioner may offer some suggestions to explore as "homework". One of the things that is emphasized is that the learning occurs through regular exploration practices. The Trager Practitioner can function as a guide and teacher but ultimately the client has to do his work. There is great variation among practitioners and clients but what I have described is fairly typical.

Now that you have some awareness and understanding of Trager Approach and some of its benefits, I ask that you include in Senate Bill 55 an exemption for Trager Practitioners from being required to spend time, effort, and money on massage therapy training that has little to do with Trager Approach other than touching.

Several other similar established organizations that do not identify their modalities as massage therapy, but do involve touch, have come together as the International Somatic Movement Education & Therapy Association to support each other and to educate the public. I would like to request that you also include them in an exemption. They are the Feldenkrais Guild of North America, Alexander Technique International, Body-Mind Centering Association Inc, and Continuum Teachers Association.

Thank you for listening and considering my testimony regarding Senate Bill 55.