

United States Trager Association
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May 14, 2021

The Honorable Stephen A. Huffman, Chair
Senate Health Committee
Ohio State Legislature
77 South High Street, 12th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Re. SB 55 to revise laws governing massage establishments / massage therapy

Dear Chairman Huffman, Vice Chairman Antani, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Health Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the United States *Trager*® Association (USTA) and in support of our 13 Certified *Trager* Practitioners in Ohio who may be adversely affected by SB 55 as currently written. We previously submitted testimony to the Committee for the March 17 hearing of this bill. (That letter is presented again below for your easier reference.) We were encouraged to see the sympathetic hearing that was given to Suzanne Marshall, a practitioner of the Feldenkrais Method, at that hearing. Although *Trager* Practitioners practice a different form of movement education, our situation under this proposed bill would be essentially the same as for Feldenkrais Teachers – unnecessarily burdened and more expensive. Appropriate exemptions, as suggested and agreed upon by the Feldenkrais Guild, the USTA and others, would be a real benefit to those who do not perform massage therapy, do not want to use the title of ‘massage’, and who are not part of the problems the bill intends to address. Please reconsider the suggested amendment to allow appropriate exemptions. Thank you for your consideration.

Most sincerely,

Jim Noriega
Law & Legislation Committee Chair
702.378.9530 / legislative@tragerus.org

United States Trager® Association
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From March 17, 2021

The *Trager* Approach® is a method of movement education that helps people find greater ease and freedom as they move through daily life. We invite you to visit our website for more information: <http://www.tragerapproach.us>

The USTA does not oppose this bill or its intent to better regulate the massage therapy profession and fight illegal activities. We have always supported massage therapy professionals to advocate for the best interests of their profession.

However, the very broad definition of massage therapy in the bill could be interpreted to include practitioners of The *Trager* Approach as massage therapists. This would be incorrect. The *Trager* Approach is not part of massage therapy training and is not recognized by massage therapy programs. The *Trager* Approach is based on an educational model, not a therapeutic one, and we do not use the terms “massage” or “therapy” to describe or advertise our work. Nor do we want to be labelled as massage practitioners. . If we were forced to license and present ourselves to the public as “Massage Therapists”, this may mislead the public about our services. Also, as Jennifer Cull and James Specker of the AMTA have correctly pointed out, the term “massage” has become associated with prostitution and this causes problems for legitimate professionals. *Trager* Practitioners should not have to take on a problematic label that does not properly apply to them in the first place.

Because training in massage therapy is not relevant to or necessary for the practice of the *Trager* Approach, mandatory massage therapy licensing for our Practitioners would place a burden of unnecessary training and expenses on them. This would also be unfair restraint of our profession by discouraging prospective *Trager* trainees or Practitioners moving in from other states who may not be able or willing to undertake unnecessary massage therapy training to practice

Moreover, professional state licensing for *Trager* Practitioners is not needed. There is no record of harm from the practice of the *Trager* Approach and there has never been a case of our Practitioners being involved in illegal activities in Ohio or any other state. Standards for Professional Conduct, Ethics and Education for *Trager* Practitioners are already set and enforced as a nation-wide standard by the United States *Trager* Association.

We respectfully suggest the inclusion of a suitable exemption for movement based educational practices, such as The *Trager* Approach, Feldenkrais and Somatic Education, in Sec. 4731.15 (F):

(F) The following persons are not required to hold a license to practice massage therapy issued under this chapter:

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(5) A person who:

- (a) uses touch, words, and directed movement to deepen awareness of existing patterns of movement as well as to suggest new possibilities of movement;*
- (b) or uses energy or superficial touch to affect the energy systems of the human body;*
- (c) or uses touch to effect change in the structure of the body while engaged in the practice of structural integration;*
- (d) and is recognized by or meets 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*

Exemptions using, or based on, this language are in place in most states that regulate massage therapy and are supported by the AMTA and numerous other organizations representing non-massage practices.

The USTA is the 501(c)(6) professional membership organization that trains and certifies practitioners of the *Trager* Approach in the U.S. We enforce the professional and educational standards, and code of ethics for Certified *Trager* Practitioners and serve the professional needs of our members. We also defend the right of our Practitioners to practice without inappropriate regulation.

Thank you for your consideration. SB 55 is a significant bill dealing with many issues that may seem more important than this, but to our Practitioners this is indeed a big deal. Please feel free to call on me for any information or assistance I can give.