

Thank you, Senators for this opportunity to testify regarding HB 81. I share your deep concerns about human trafficking and sex crimes, and applaud this legislature for changing current massage laws to close the loopholes that permits these horrific crimes to occur in our great state.

My name is Leah Rachocki, I am a fourth generation Ohioan. I spent 20 life-changing years living in Alaska, and returned to Ohio in 2015. I have been a client of Rolf Structural Integration since 2000, and a practitioner since 2004.

Ida P Rolf, the developer of Rolf Structural Integration, earned a doctorate in biochemistry from Barnard College in 1920. Rolf Structural Integration is the result of her work with osteopaths, chiropractors, cranial sacral therapists, and psychotherapists, as well as biochemists and physicists. I often tell people that Dr Rolf took the ideas of the AT Still, the developer of Osteopathy, and added Physics, as a general way of explaining the work. Before her death in 1979, Dr Rolf described Rolf Structural Integration:

‘Some individuals may perceive their losing fight with gravity as a sharp pain in their back, others as the unflattering contour of their body, others as constant fatigue, yet others as an unrelentingly threatening environment. Those over forty may call it old age. And yet all these signals may be pointing to a single problem so prominent in their own structure, as well as others, that it has been ignored: they are off balance, they are at war with gravity...practitioners of Structural Integration do not feel ourselves to be therapists. The gravitational field is the therapist. What we do is prepare the body to receive support from the gravitational field which gives a sense of well-being.’

Dr Rolf’s work also influenced the development and use of myofascial release techniques by Physical Therapists and Massage Therapists. Rolfing is a key ingredient in Somatic Experiencing, used successfully to work with trauma by more psychologists and social workers every day.

Rolfers learn anatomy and physiology in terms of relationships through connective tissue/fascia and environment/gravity. Our cadaver labs are more thorough than standard medical schools. Each Rolfer works differently, guided by the Principles which define Rolfing.

Rolfing is covered by Health Savings Accounts/Flex Savings Accounts. Though we have been working with the insurance industry to establish a treatment code for Rolfing, we have not yet achieved this goal. Most of my clients pay for Rolfing sessions out of pocket. Rolfers are typically self-employed. Since we manage our own scheduling, we do not employ staff. Here in Ohio, Rolfers do not bill insurance; Rolfing is offered on a fee-for-service basis.

Offices used by Rolfers and other somatic practitioners are often classroom-sized private spaces, or large private offices. Our work demands room to move during a session. We do not use oils or lotions. My clients do not undress; some Rolfers ask clients to wear clothing typical of joggers/runners.

Since I returned to Ohio, my Rolfing practice has rented professional work space from two yoga studios, a masso-therapy office, and currently is sharing space in a group practice that includes psychotherapists, movement educators and bodyworkers. In addition to private sessions, I offer small classes both in person and online. I have offered education to Care Source's staff as well as guidance for business leaders, university professors, health care workers and business managers. My clients are able to work, enjoy hobbies and return to the life they too often were told by doctors was lost to injury/pain. Several clients have traveled from neighboring states to work with me.

Many of my clients are first responders, veterans, and women who have suffered greatly without impactful help from western medicine. I work with children, pregnancy/new moms and babies, elders, and have training to work with equines and canines. People at any stage in life can benefit from Rolfing, by learning - and practicing - simple skills to be in better relationship with gravity. This improved relationship with gravity allows for healing and increased self-agency.

Over the course of my career, I have pursued extensive continuing education, which is paid by me. I earn my living session by session. Word of mouth and my simple website are my main sources of new clients.

A major and entirely unexpected result of the Pandemic is the discovery (first made by Brazilian Rolfers) that we can translate our work to online sessions. The results of online Rolfing sessions are profound, meet the goals of Rolfing, and are more affordable for clients. Online Rolfing does require training, and not every Rolfer in Ohio is interested in working online.

I am in full support of a registry for certified Somatic practitioners including Rolfers, Feldenkreis and Alexander practitioners without additional training requirements. I am concerned about the handful of people who are practicing as 'somatic practitioners' without any certification; these folks claim that they are 'self taught' and collect money to work with clients without oversight from any reputable educational or professional organization. Somatic education practices are far too complex to be 'self-taught'.

I am also interested to learn if Somatic Practitioners will be added to the Medical / Massage board, so that we can provide these boards and lawmakers education about the less-than-obvious differences among 'bodywork'. I believe the addition of at least two reputable Ohio-based Somatic Practitioners to the oversight board is necessary so that Ohioans have access to responsible somatic practitioners long into the future, free from the winds of politics.

There are a handful of very useful bodywork modalities, and many shoddy, irresponsible trainings that may not be in the best interest of Ohioans. I see the Medical/Massage boards as the pathway to ensure safe bodywork for professional healing arts practices in Ohio.

Finally, there is some legal history in Ohio that may be worth knowing as you craft HB 81. In 1901, the Ohio Supreme Court ensured in State v. Gravett that Osteopathy is a valid medical practice, despite great efforts from traditional western medicine to eliminate it. Today, Rolfers offer touch and movement based work that comes from Osteopathy, though we are not physicians. People trained with standard western medical practices have been threatened by Rolfing and somatic practices which are so different from standard western medicine and yield noticeably different results. This Committee's willingness to establish a registry for Somatic Practitioners is important, and I implore you to ensure that somatic practitioners have reasonable protection from special interests and politics.

It is impossible for me to address this committee without acknowledging that my Rolfing career was made possible by Alaska's laws governing my right to choose. Had I not had access to abortion care - in staunchly and historically conservative Alaska - I would have ended up dependent on the state, with major health problems, or worse. I am grateful every day that I had the opportunity and right freedom to choose, instead of the being forced by the state into a life oppositional to my best interests.

I am glad to offer additional information and assistance to any member of this committee during the process of drafting HB 81 in to law.

Thank you for your time, and dedication to the good people of Ohio.

Leah Rachocki

Owner

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