My name is Deby Van Ohlen and I am a Connecticut licensed massage therapist working in West Hartford. I co-own Nurturing Hands, LLC with Wendy Payton, also a licensed massage therapist. I am an active member of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Massage Therapy Association.

I am writing in support of Raised Bill No. 5455, *An Act Concerning Penalties for and the Investigation of the Operation of Illegal Massage Establishments.* The proposed changes:

- listing the employer as well as the practitioner;
- including shiatsu, acupressure and Thai massage in the definition of massage;
- legislating actions in case of violations and to investigate probable violations;

all strengthen the existing bill.

Why does the bill need to be strengthened? Unscrupulous individuals put the public at risk by employing unlicensed persons. Worse are the criminals who are using these loopholes as a front for human trafficking. Three populations are at risk:

- The general public who thinks they are receiving health care services and instead are putting themselves at risk
- Legitimate practitioners who may be approached by individuals who think they are engaged in prostitution
- Persons who are being made to work in the awful world of human Trafficking.

Please vote in favor of these changes which will allow the Department of Public Health to follow its mission to protect and improve the health and safety of the people of Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Deby Van Ohlen, LMT license #1389
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