

Testimony of Gina Norman of Westport in support of

**HB 6243 AN ACT MAKING A TECHNICAL CHANGE TO THE STATUTE
CONCERNING ADVERTISING BY MASSAGE THERAPISTS**

Public Health Committee Public Hearing

Friday, March 15, 2013

Representative Johnson, Senator Gerratana and members of the Public Health Committee, for the record my name is Gina Norman and I am submitting testimony in favor of H.B. No. 6243 AN ACT MAKING A TECHNICAL CHANGE TO THE STATUTE CONCERNING ADVERTISING BY MASSAGE THERAPISTS.

My name is Gina Norman, my husband Stan Woodman and I founded Kaia Yoga in 2006. We currently have two studios in Fairfield county, our studio in Westport is the largest in Connecticut. We employ over 60 yoga teachers, 10 massage therapists, and operate 2 all organic juice bars and cafes. We have committed ourselves entirely to offering our community access to optimum health and wellness for every aspect of their lives.

I have been practicing Thai Yoga Therapy for over 15 years, I have studied extensively here in the US and in Thailand. I have never called myself a massage therapist and I do not believe that Thai Yoga is a form of massage therapy. A Thai Yoga session is much more like private yoga than massage. I think that some of the confusion here lies with the use of this word "massage". I understand that Massage Therapists in Connecticut have stringent certification regulations, and I make sure that they are followed to the letter in our wellness program. However, to put Thai Yoga in the same category as western massage is to allow something to be defined and restricted simply because of its association with a word rather than the fact that it resembles the activity.

Thai Yoga is typically done on the floor, both the recipient and the practitioner are fully clothed, and the recipient is manipulated into postures that are similar to yoga, pilates or many other movement based healing modalities. Thai Yoga is about stretching, breathing and energy. It is not massage, the description of massage as "muscle manipulation" leaves

plenty of coaches, Pilates teachers, yoga instructors, and personal trainers in a strangely undefined space.

If there is a desire to regulate Massage more effectively then we must carefully define what that means, not create broad definitions that cause other forms of energy work to suffer. There is a need in our community for Thai Yoga, I see it in students in both my Greenwich and Westport locations. They seek out yoga, meditation, and other offerings from our wellness program and cafe, in an attempt to find balance in their busy lives. Please do not limit their access to something that can really help people to heal, to improve their yoga practice, to build connection to their breath and body in a new way. It does not compete with massage, they can easily co-exist offering people many ways to improve their experience of their lives.

Thank you for your time,

GIna Norman