

HALL **HB 6243**

My name is Michelle Hall , I have been a CT licensed massage therapist (Lic. #004014). I live in Bridgeport, Connecticut. My most recent massage office was located in Milford, but I did have an office in Bridgeport with a Chiropractor from 2009-20011. I am a 2004 graduate of a year and a half Massage Therapy program from Connecticut Center of Massage. In 2006, i spent a month at the Kripalu Yoga Center in Massachusetts to obtain my 200hr yoga certification. Having such a connection with both the love of teaching yoga and practicing massage i feel that i am able to give you a very relevant opinion on Thai Massage and why it needs to stay under licensing for therapist.

Last year the Legislature passed HB 5455 requiring, among other things, that anyone practicing or advertising Shiatsu, acupressure or any of the variation on Thai yoga massage be a state licensed massage therapist. This was generally considered to be a well thought out, well written and effective law.

I remember when taking my first Thai Massage/Yoga course offered by the Lotus Palm School in 2005. It was a wonderful program with a mix of massage therapists and yoga teachers in the week long course. The teachers actually offered suggestions of how to circumvent any laws in the various states which had listed the modality strictly under a massage license. They themselves called Thai Massage and Thai Yoga the same thing. The best way for someone who wasn't a massage therapist to offer was to label it as Thai Yoga instead. Honestly, this did not set well with me. It wasn't until obtaining my yoga certification i realized exactly *why* it did not feel right; besides being told to manufacture a way to side step the laws.

While taking my 200 hr yoga teacher training, We did have one or two lectures on anatomy. Coming from a massage therapist background, it was the most basic of anatomy. So many people who did not have a massage or an anatomy background struggled and needed to be paired up with someone who had a stronger background in it. This is what struck me as one of the reasons why someone who is only a yoga teacher should not be hands on manipulating the soft tissue working with people under the umbrella of Thai Yoga/Massage. Neither that first Thai Yoga workshop I took nor the Yoga Teacher Training anatomy section did they ever venture into pathology which should have careful consideration.

Removing the name Thai Yoga from the list of massage modalities under licensing, also opens doors for anyone to practice. Anyone with out any formal training or anatomy training. Anyone including sex workers. It has taken a long time for massage therapist to shake off the negative images due to illegal massage parlors. Finally we are seen as legit bodyworkers assisting in prevention of injury and helping those who need it for aches and pains.

Now, unfortunately, due to complaints from some yoga teachers in Fairfield the laws original sponsor, Auden Grogins, has introduced HB6243, which would remove the name "Thai Yoga" from the list of modalities requiring a massage license. Thai Yoga is no different than Thai massage. It involves the

"mobilization of the soft tissue which may include skin, fascia, tendons, ligaments, and muscles, for the purpose of establishing and maintaining good physical condition".

It is, by definition, massage and just because some people were previously practicing outside the law is no reason to change that law. These people do not have the necessary training in anatomy and physiology, pathology or contraindications for massage. Allowing them to practice is a danger to the public and a slap in the face to those of us who have spent the time and money to properly and legally learn massage and Thai massage.

As a life long Bridgeport resident, a Connecticut Licensed Massage Therapist, and a Certified Yoga Teacher, i find that allowing anyone outside of a massage therapist to offer this modality, would open up harm to the public as well as allowing anyone with nefarious illegal intentions to take away from my hard work and legitimate practice. It has been very thrilling to see so many illegal massage parlors shut down in my town. It has not only been illegal but takes away from the legitimacy i have in paying my dues - schooling, taking the national exam, and paying my CT licensing fees.

This bill would also defeat the purpose of the original by providing sex workers and human traffickers with another euphemism to hide behind.

Please vote against HB 6243.

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