

To all those who will be voting on the proposed change to HB5455:

I am a CT licensed massage therapist who started my business 23 years ago, *after completing the necessary training and securing office space approved by local zoning*. At that time it was a very different (and sometimes scary) world out there because zoning in many towns was "loose", massage parlors still abounded, there was no professional license requirement and the public had minimal and unreliable ways in which to distinguish the "good" from the "bad and the ugly" in the world of massage. These conditions left us having to defend our legitimacy and ethical standing in society as well as "fend off creeps" looking for "something more" than legitimate therapeutic massage. Over the years, however, significant progress in these areas had been made, largely due to the tireless efforts of the American Massage Therapy Association which wants to protect not only ethical, licensed therapists but also the public. But something is afoot that could undo much of the good that has been done. And you are in a position to prevent this from happening.

Please DO NOT change HB5455 in any way that would allow anyone to do soft tissue manipulation (including Thai Yoga instructors) without having to first obtain 500 hours of training from an accredited school and passing the test for a CT license. Eastern forms of body work (like Shiatsu and Thai Yoga) are still technically "massage" and the public deserves to have the same protections in place when seeking these types of body work as they do when looking for a Swedish massage. Dropping Thai Yoga from this bill would constitute a serious step backward in our state's efforts to protect the public. And it would create a HUGE loophole for those who wish to continue engaging in human sex traffickingby simply hiding behind the facade of what *appears* to be a legitimate and lawful massage therapy/body work business.

Please, people need *more* protection in this world, not less. Keep our laws clear, strong and inclusive. Anything less than this makes them unenforceable and, in the end, a waste of time and taxpayer dollars.

Thank you.

Barbara (age 65)

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