

Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-301

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING MASSAGE THERAPISTS.

Vote Date: 3/19/2018

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/5/2018

File No.:

***Disclaimer:** The following Joint Favorable Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

Public Health Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

SB-301 requires applicants for a massage therapy license to complete 750 classroom hours, instead of 500 hours as under current law, and at least 60 hours of unpaid clinical or internship experience. Existing law, unchanged by the bill, also requires applicants to pass a national exam. This bill also requires licensed massage therapists who provide direct patient care to maintain professional liability insurance in an amount that is at least \$2 million for one person for one occurrence, with an aggregate of at least \$6 million.

Additionally, the bill generally allows massage therapists licensed in other states to provide voluntary, supervised massage therapy services at the invitation of the American Massage Therapy Association Connecticut Chapter's Community Service Massage Team, provided they do not hold themselves out to be licensed in Connecticut. Existing law already allows out of state massage therapists to do this at the Special Olympics or other athletic competitions for individuals with disabilities.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Connecticut Representative Charles J. Ferraro, 117 Assembly District:

Representative Ferraro notes that massage therapy is an excellent complementary modality to treating pain management. He is also in favor of increasing the required hours of training for massage therapists from 500 to 750 and the addition of 60 hours of clinical training. Representative Ferraro commends the committee for developing an action plan to combat human trafficking in the form of a bill. Massage parlors disguised as legitimate massage therapy businesses are used as a conduit to human trafficking; increasing education requirements would decrease this problem.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Jillian Gilchrest, Trafficking in Persons Council:

Ms. Gilchrest is in favor of SB-301. Her argument is against the cultural perception associated with the profession of massage therapy. The work environment of massage therapists has become dangerous due to the false association with illicit massage parlors. She claims that the national average for massage education is 1000 hours yet in Connecticut it is only 500 hours. This difference in hour requirements allows for more illicit massage businesses to obtain fraudulent licenses.

Ms. Gilchrest suggests that the state of Connecticut can address this problem by increasing the requirement of education hours, clinical hours, and requiring massage therapists to carry liability insurance.

Becca Torns-Barker, President, American Massage Therapy Association – Connecticut Chapter:

Ms. Torns-Barker notes that SB-301 originated two years ago with the Connecticut Chapter of the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA-CT). Upon graduation, students did not feel prepared to take on the role of a massage therapist. AMTA-CT found that the national average of required hours for massage therapy was 697. 18 states require more than 500 hours, and 9 states require liability insurance. With this information in mind, AMTA-CT met with education directors of massage therapy programs and they agreed on 750 required hours including 60 hours of clinical experience.

In addition to meeting with education directors of massage therapy, AMTA-CT has also been working with the Department of Public Health to close any loopholes in the program process which allowed for unqualified individuals to receive massage therapy licensing. With the increase in the required hours for the license, massage therapy becomes a less attractive option for human trafficking in our state.

Nicole Arel, Licensed Massage Therapist:

Ms. Arel is a seasoned licensed massage therapist and supports the bill. She believes that by increasing the hourly requirements we help students expand their knowledge of current massage therapy standards. In addition to the hourly increase, Ms. Arel supports the liability insurance requirement as it would protect the therapist and the consumers. She also believes that with these new requirements in place, Connecticut will become less accessible to human trafficking.

Scott Raymond, Licensed Massage Therapist:

Mr. Raymond strongly supports SB-301. In 1994, the hourly requirements for massage therapists in Connecticut were the same as they are today, however, 24 years later the profession has changed. Massage therapy is now being used as a guise to cover human trafficking by illicit businesses. The hourly requirement in neighboring states is higher than it is in Connecticut with New York at 1000 hours, Massachusetts at 650, and New Hampshire

at 750 hours. It is time for Connecticut to catch up so as to allow massage therapy graduates the ability to practice in other states without having to take additional courses.

In addition to reducing the human trafficking issue, massage therapy has been approved by the FDA as a proactive response to the opioid crisis. Mr. Raymond supports the requirement of massage therapists to carry individual liability insurance. He believes that all healthcare practitioners that have direct patient care should be required to carry it.

Sandra Cook, Licensed Massage Therapist:

Ms. Cook supports the requirement of massage therapists carrying liability insurance. She is an employee of Cortiva Institute, a massage therapy school whose program consists of 720 hours and includes a component of more than 70 hours of clinical experience. Ms. Cook writes that most of her students are adult learners and have full time jobs, thus raising the requirements to 810 hours will be too burdensome. She believes 720 hours of learning are sufficient to allow for public safety.

Sue Passini, Massage Therapy Instruction:

Ms. Passini supports the passage of SB-301. She notes that 43% of clients who received massages in 2017 did so for health related reasons. Raising the standards of education to become a massage therapist will give the public confidence that their therapists meet the qualifications necessary in order to safely and effectively address their health concerns. She also believes that the raising of standards will make it more challenging for illicit massage parlors to operate under the guise of legitimate massage therapy businesses.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None provided.

Reported by: Valentina Mehmeti

Date: 3/23/2018