April 8, 2019

The Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee
Finance Committee Co-C HB7410 ‘AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN TAX RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMISSION ON FISCAL STABILITY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH AND ESTABLISHING A STEM SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM’.

Chair Senator Fonfara and Representative Rojas,

I am writing this letter to express my concern and opposition to the possible tax to be placed on Massage Therapy services beginning in January 2020. Massage Therapy is a part of our Healthcare system. It is NOT a luxury for many but an absolute necessity. For people suffering from chronic pain, massage can often provide relief for days or weeks. This enables the weaning from medications and in the face of our opioid crisis it can also save lives.

Imagine being in such chronic, daily pain and one of the most consistent forms of relief is massage therapy. Now imagine not being able to afford this weekly service due to the added expense of taxation. Now suddenly you are unable to utilize your HSA money for this health care service.

Imagine suffering from lymphedema due to trauma, surgery or illness. Your limbs swell uncontrollably and the only relief you are able to find to reduce the swelling is manual lymphatic drainage, a form of massage therapy. Now this service will be taxed. Your five initial sessions now are unaffordable. Will the insurance company cover the reimbursement of the state tax?

Imagine pulling a muscle in your back while on vacation with your kids. You see your physician upon your return and he sends you to a physical therapist. After 4 months of PT twice a week you have no improvement. You decide to try massage therapy. After just one session you see improvement. Your massage therapist recommends sessions every two weeks for four sessions
and then monthly. Unfortunately, you are unable to afford this due to the recent CT tax added to these services and you are unable to use your HSA money. Do you live with chronic pain? Do you risk injuring the tissues further and now requiring hospitalization or possible surgery? Are you now taking pain medications every day just to be able to work?

There has been some talk about medically necessary massage. This will obstruct direct access to care, for those already under the care of a massage therapist. It will delay the treatment to help the clients. As a member for the health care team, the massage therapist should be able to see the client and start treatment of the soft tissues as soon as possible.

As a Licensed Massage Therapist #7855 and a Registered Nurse #76259, I implore you to reconsider adding a tax to Massage Therapy Services.

Respectfully,

Mairi Harvey, RN, LMT