Dear Senator Fonfara, Representative Rojas, and the other distinguished members of the Finance, Budget and Planning Committee,

My name is Tama Mackay. I am a CT licensed Sports Massage Therapist and Business Owner. My specialty is working with elite professional athletes and I oppose HB7410, ‘An Act Concerning Certain Tax Recommendations Of The Commission On Fiscal Stability And Economic Growth And Establishing A STEM Scholarship Program’ because you are proposing to tax massage therapy.

I testified before you all last month in opposition to Bill SB 877. I cannot afford to take off another entire day to testify and respectfully, cannot believe that this is even a consideration from our newly elected Governor.

I have spent my entire career aligning myself with the medical profession. The classes I take are attended by Physical Therapists (PTs), Chiropractors, Athletic Trainers and medical students. I perform many of the same techniques as chiropractors, PTs and athletic trainers, one of which is Active Release Techniques (ART). I am one of only 3 massage therapists in the state who is certified in ART. Why would you tax me for doing ART, but not the others?

Let me ask you:

- Why do professional sports teams use massage therapy as a part of their pre and post event routines? **Because massage is healthcare.**

- Why do the United States Olympic Training Committee and the National Governing Bodies pay massage therapists to travel with TEAM USA athletes? **Because massage is healthcare.**

- Why have the Medical Directors of the National Hockey League and Major League Baseball teams hired Massage Therapists to provide direct care to their players since the 2001-2002 season? **Because massage is healthcare.**

They all consider massage therapy to be a viable medical treatment.

According to Doctor Brent A. Bauer of the MAY-oh Clinic, (quote)"The notion that massage is ‘just an indulgence’ is antiquated and there are over 1,000 studies and published reports that offer scientific evidence on the health effects of massage therapy.”

When I was massaging at the US Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs a few weeks ago, I worked as part of the Sport Medicine Team, alongside physical therapists, chiropractors, orthopedic doctors and other healthcare professions. Many of the Olympic athletes commented on how important receiving regular massage has been to their training and their recovery.

Abby Wambach, two-time Olympic gold medalist in soccer, stated, (quote) “The physical and mental benefits of massage are numerous and it’s something that is not just a luxury, but should be an important part of our lives.”
The US Olympic Training Center is incorporating a hamstring injury prevention program, and they state that 57% of the hurdlers’ and sprinters’ injuries are due to hamstring injuries. This is why massage is used as an approved therapy to minimize these injuries.

The new report from WalletHub states that Connecticut has the second highest tax rate in the country and it may become #1 if these massage taxes are approved. Why would our constituents want to impose more taxes and discourage our small business owners and Independent Contractors from bringing their skills and expertise into this state? If massage therapists are taxed on the services we provide, not only is it a burden on small business owners, but it will also be a deterrent for individual practitioners to start their own businesses in this state.

Massage is healthcare. Massage therapy has fought for proper recognition from law enforcement and the healthcare industries. Now that research exists proving the health benefits of massage (such as lowering blood sugar, blood pressure, and cortisol levels), and healthcare plans are including massage therapy as an integrated part of wellness and recovery, do not move us backwards by subjecting us to sales tax.

The State of Connecticut has been supportive of the field of massage therapy. So much so, that we worked with the DPH to increase the required hours to enter the field and to require LMTs to maintain liability insurance in keeping with the standards for other healthcare professionals. This becomes enforceable beginning in Oct 2019.

LMTs in Connecticut are required to pay $375 initially, and every two years we renew our license at $255. This is far above the $100-$150 required of nurses, PTs and athletic trainers, dental hygienists and OTs. Also, we are required to complete continuing education; that is not a requirement of all healthcare providers.

Many of the towns in which we operate further require additional massage establishment licenses or further background checks that other healthcare professionals are not subject to or required to maintain. The State, and municipalities, are getting their money from one of the lower income producers in the health field. Adding sales tax is an unnecessary hardship for LMTs and our clientele.

Please vote NO to HB7410 and any budget proposals that require massage therapy clients to pay sales tax on their services.

Sincerely,

Tama Mackay, CT LMT#008668
Milford, CT