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

My name is Maureen Stott and I am writing to explain why I want you to vote NO to HB7410, ‘An Act Concerning Certain Tax Recommendations Of The Commission On Fiscal Stability And Economic Growth And Establishing A STEM Scholarship Program’ that proposes subjecting massage therapy to sales tax.

In addition to being a client who uses massage therapy for my healthcare, I am also CT Licensed Massage therapist.

**Massage Therapy IS healthcare.**

Studies show that massage therapy is effective for people dealing with a lot of different conditions, illnesses, and situation.

As a client, I know this first hand. Most recently, while dealing with breast cancer. Studies show that massage therapy eases the anxiety that many of us with a cancer diagnosis experience before, during, and after surgery and treatments. *(research references are on the last page of this document.)* I found that receiving massage during this time not only eased my anxiety, it eased my pain too. And according to my surgeon I healed faster than expected. This is just one example of where massage therapy was a *healthcare* option, and very effective. My experience is far from unique.

Hospitals in the Hartford area: St. Francis, Hartford, Manchester (and other hospitals in CT), offer massage therapy to all who are going through cancer surgery and treatments. The hospital staff and professionals recognize massage therapy as a healthcare profession. They realize that it is effective and support our profession.

I had an 83 year old client who tapped her head and said, “My massages are as good for this as it is for my body.” She recognized that massage plays a part in mental health and physical health.
An exciting announcement came at the 2018 American Massage Therapy Association National Convention where we learned that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through an Inter-Agency Task Force revealed that **massage therapy is being considered as a non-opiate option for pain management**.

If the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) views massage therapy as a healthcare profession so should the **State of CT**.

If massage therapists, who are healthcare providers, are going to be subjected to sales tax then **ALL** healthcare providers need to also pay sales tax. That includes, MDs, nurses, chiropractors, physical therapists, occupational therapists, etc. To only require this for LMTs amounts to discrimination.

I have been a Licensed Massage Therapist since 1992 and have witnessed the changes in society’s and the medical profession’s perception of our field. It took a lot of time and great effort for our profession to become a respected field and for people to come to know and trust the fact that massage is effective when dealing with many medical issues. Each year more research is being done to support these hypotheses. None of this could have happened unless we were recognized as a healthcare profession. We need to remain healthcare professionals so the research will continue.

If we are required to collect taxes for our services, rates will need to increase, not only to include the tax, but to account for the additional it will be required for the added paperwork and record keeping. I’m sure that this will decrease the number of clients I will be seeing.

Also, if massage therapy is seen as a personal service, I believe that public perception of massage therapy will revert to a modality that is only for the rich. We will no longer be seen as healthcare providers because no one pays a tax when they go to any other healthcare providers.

**This will be a burden to massage therapists, our clients, and to our profession as a whole.**
All the years of work we have done to elevate our profession in the minds of the public and other healthcare providers will be lost and it will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to regain the respect and trust we have now.

In the 1990’s massage therapy was thought of as either a luxury for the wealthy or part of the sex trade. It took a long time and a lot of hard work to show the public that we are legitimate business and that the benefits of receiving massage span a wide spectrum, When used in conjunction with other healthcare professionals, it can be extremely effective.

The public perception was that they did not “deserve” to get a massage because it was too self-indulgent. It took years to turn this around and for the public to understand that massage is NOT a luxury, it is a NECESSITY for their well being and health.

Our value and contribution in the area of pain management, mental health, orthopedics, etc. will be ignored if people think that massage therapy is a personal service and therefore only for pampering. People who can benefit from massage therapy will be reluctant to receive a massage because of this perception that it is only for luxury or for the wealthy. They will miss out on the option to choose a non-pharmaceutical option for pain management, or for all the other therapeutic benefits. Your vote against HB7410 will make sure that this does not happen.

As a therapist, I will be forced to increase my fees to help pay for the time it will take for the extra paperwork and record keeping. With an increase in price plus sales tax, some clients will no longer be able to afford it.

I fear that many people who would have considered massage as a safe alternative to using a prescribed medication or who, before agreeing to more invasive, dramatic measures, would receive a massage to see if it could help, will no longer even think about it as an option. And, if they believe that they need to “deserve” a massage because it is only a luxury for personal care, they won’t even turn to massage therapy.
In conclusion, with this evidence I hope that you can now see that massage therapy is a healthcare profession. And, as a healthcare profession, it is inappropriate to imposed a tax not levied on other healthcare professionals. Taxing massage therapists will have a detrimental impact on how we are perceived by the public and other healthcare providers. It will set us back decades. People will dismiss massage as an option and revert back to thinking that it is a luxury only for the rich and self-indulgent. We will be going back to step one and it may be impossible to regain the respect we now experience. It will set up a barrier for people to see massage therapy as a non-pharmaceutical option especially for pain or mental health issues. And it will be a burden to the individual therapists and will decrease the number of clients they see in a year. The tax and the additional record-keeping will cause the price of getting a massage to increase and may become too expensive for an increasing number of people.

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

Sincerely,
Maureen Stott, CT LMT#135
149 Grove Street
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References - Massage Therapy and Cancer patients.


