



**HB 45**

**Position: Support with amendments**

January 28, 2020

Dear Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and members of the House Ways & Means Committee,

The American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA) is the largest non-profit, professional association serving massage therapists, massage students and massage schools. The Maryland Chapter has over 1500 professional members, working as licensed therapists throughout the state.

We support Senator McCray's bill with one key amendment – striking the words “massage parlor” from the bill. It's our understanding that the recent federal tax bill that provided enhancements for opportunity zones didn't include any references to massage parlors. The IRS recently released guidance that excluded “sin businesses” which are listed as private or commercial golf courses, country clubs, massage parlors, hot tub facilities, suntan facilities, racetracks or other facilities used for gambling, or stores the principal business of which is the sale of alcoholic beverages for consumption off premises.

Aside from one reference in this list, there is no federal definition of “massage parlor” and does not exist a part of our practice act in the health occupations code. We understand the sponsor's intention to mirror language provided by the IRS and appreciate Senator McCray's understanding that “massage parlor” is an inappropriate and political inclusion of “sin businesses” that perpetuate the untrue stigma about sex work and clinical therapists.

There are more than 4,000 trained and state board licensed and registered massage therapists in Maryland who provide a variety of clinical services, many of which fall under qualified reimbursements for health insurance carriers or qualify for payment via health savings accounts. Our providers are regulated by the Maryland Department of Health.

As a long-standing and verifiable health occupation and a highly regulated health care industry service, we sincerely appreciate the amendment being offered to remove this offending language for the bill and are happy to provide any additional information as required by the committee or the sponsor to move the bill with this amendment.

All the best,

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