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## Why cupping should not be considered practicing massage

HB 1497 adds “Massage Cupping” to the definition of what it means to “practice massage therapy” in Maryland. We object to this change for the reasons listed below.

1. There is only a small community of practitioners (mostly very small businesses and sole practitioners) that do cupping therapy in Maryland. These people are generally not tracking legislation in Annapolis and are unaware of HB 1497. We may be the only party that has raised a question. We ask at a minimum that this bill be tabled (UNF) until 2025 so we can promote “community awareness” relevant to the bill. More practitioners need the opportunity to have their voices heard. Short of that, we ask that the “Massage Cupping” restriction be removed (WFA) from HB 1497.
2. The term “Massage Cupping” is improper. Please search for “Cupping” on the web. From WebMd.com, you will find “**Cupping** therapy is an ancient form of alternative medicine that involves placing special cups on your skin to create suction. It may help with pain, inflammation, blood flow, relaxation and well-being”. No where in your search will you see “massage” mixed with “cupping”. The State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners may be overreaching to include cupping under the massage umbrella.
3. Cupping therapy has ancient Asian and Egyptian origins and is not even taught in many massage schools. I surveyed four Maryland school curriculums, and only one covered cupping.
  - a. [Our Curriculum - HMTI \(massagetrainingbaltimore.com\)](http://massagetrainingbaltimore.com) Not covered.
  - b. [Program: Massage Therapy Certificate - Community College of Baltimore County - Acalog ACMS™ \(ccbcmd.edu\)](http://ccbcmd.edu) Not covered.
  - c. [Potomac Massage Training Institute \(PMTI\) | Home Silver Spring, MD](http://potomacmassage.com) Yes it is covered
  - d. [Program: Massage Therapy Certificate - Community College of Baltimore County - Acalog ACMS™ \(ccbcmd.edu\)](http://ccbcmd.edu) Not covered

4. Other reasons why Cupping (an Ancient Asian practice) should not be restricted by the State Board:
  - a. Cupping in Maryland is often done by Asians who speak only limited English. These people need help getting employment & this is a good way for them to make a living. With their limited language abilities, getting a massage license would be next to impossible.
  - b. To restrict cupping would discriminate against Asians practicing their ancient healing art.
  - c. Perhaps there's another way to address the minimal "safety" issues the Massage Board may be concerned about without requiring massage licensing to do cupping. While we're not experts, we do feel that safety issues with cupping are minimal and would occur only on extremely rare occasions.
  
5. I kindly request anonymity with my testimony to the degree possible. Here's why:
  - a. My wife runs several Asian acupressure / reflexology practices that also do some cupping.
  - b. One of my wife's locations was raided in 2020 by local county vice squad detectives.
  - c. The detectives first looked for prostitution but found no females working at the location.
  - d. Next, the detectives looked for human trafficking. They checked that all people were valid workers – everyone had their EAD cards (employment authorization).
  - e. The detectives decided to file a charge of "massage without a license" even though no services were performed on the undercover vice detective who first entered the studio.
  - f. We follow the current law – we do mainly foot rubs and acupressure / reflexology with clients who are fully clothed except for footwear. Our defense attorney made this case to the county prosecuting attorney.
  - g. The county prosecutor dropped the charges, but we still suffered great anxiety and a \$2,500 legal bill.
  - h. Considering the above, it's easy to see why we don't want our objection to HB 1497 somehow triggering another raid.