



March 12, 2024

House Health and Government Operations Committee
House Office Building, Room 241
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support of HB 1497, State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners

Dear Chairman Pena-Melnyk and Members of the House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee:

The Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB®) is a not-for-profit corporation with membership comprised of massage therapy regulatory boards and agencies in the United States and its territories. **The Maryland State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners is a member of the FSMTB.** The mission of FSMTB is to support its member boards in their work to ensure that the practice of massage therapy is provided to the public safely and competently.

FSMTB supports the passage of Maryland House Bill 1497. This bill will make licensure requirements for Maryland massage therapy applicants **more uniform with requirements from other states and the FSMTB Model Massage Practice Act** ([*Model Massage Practice Act*](#)).

The proposed language to amend the definition of “practice massage therapy” to include certain techniques in the scope of practice and requirements to practice specific techniques and instruments **bolsters public safety standards by outlining specific education hour requirements for topics not taught in initial massage education courses.** Leaving room for interpretation creates an environment that fosters confusion, putting the consuming public in harm's way and therapists unknowingly at risk for disciplinary action. Establishing statutory requirements for the use and practice of techniques and instruments that are not taught in the curriculum for initial education also creates more learning opportunities which **supports the need for continuing education, keeping massage professionals up to date with best practices in the profession.**

Currently, 35 states that regulate massage therapy require background checks (state, national, or both) to be conducted for licensure. Criminal background checks are important to public safety,

especially when considering reinstating a license. They can **reveal information that was not disclosed** by the individual or was not reported by law enforcement while the individual was practicing or during the time the license lapsed. FSMTB supports adding criminal history checks as a requirement for license reinstatement, especially due to the vulnerable nature of the massage therapy profession. **Consumers are generally in a private room in a one-on-one setting, in a state of undress.** It is important for their safety that the board can effectively fulfill its role of public safety by **ensuring therapists are fit to practice before reentering the profession.**

FSMTB appreciates the efforts of the legislature in promoting the safe and competent practice of massage therapy. Should you have any questions about the FSMTB or any of the above information, please feel free to contact me directly at 913.681.0380 or by email at ahernandez@fsmtb.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ashley Hernandez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Ashley Hernandez, MPA
Government Relations Specialist, FSMTB