

Chair Beidle and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

The American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA) Maryland Chapter would like to offer our support for SB217. AMTA and the Maryland Board of Massage Therapy Examiners have collaborated extensively to enhance the professionalism, safety, and quality of massage therapy practice within the state of Maryland.

Together, we have increased the required education hours for massage therapists from 500 to 600, in 2014 and then from 600 to 750 in 2022, ensuring practitioners receive comprehensive training necessary to perform their work safely and effectively. This advancement aligns Maryland with national best practices and includes the adoption of Commission on Massage Therapy Accreditation (COMTA)-endorsed curricula for massage schools in the state.

Public safety has remained a cornerstone of our joint efforts. Initiatives have included:

- **Background Checks:** Instituting mandatory background checks for all aspiring massage therapists in 2015.
- **Fingerprinting Requirements:** Updating fingerprinting standards in 2021 to work with the Central Repository and allow the Maryland Board of Massage Therapy Examiners to receive criminal history updates promptly.
- **Establishment Licensure:** Empowering county-level governments to enforce establishment licensure requirements, bolstering oversight and regulation.
- **Aiding and Abetting Law:** Enacting the nation's first Aiding and Abetting Law to combat illegal activities within massage establishments.

The Board has demonstrated its commitment to evolving and refining regulatory standards to keep pace with the needs of both the public and the profession. Recent achievements include:

- **Recognizing Massage Therapy as Treatment:** Updating the definition of "massage therapy" in 2023 to classify it as a "treatment" under certain circumstances, further legitimizing the profession.
- **Insurance Coverage Reform:** Closing loopholes in 2022 that previously allowed insurance providers to deny coverage for massage therapy services.

The Maryland Board of Massage Therapy Examiners remains steadfast in its mission to make massage therapy in Maryland safer for the public while elevating the profession. Our collaborative efforts ensure that Maryland's massage therapists are among the most educated, knowledgeable, and professional practitioners in the field.

We thank you for your continued support of our efforts to advance the profession and protect the public, and we respectfully request a favorable report on SB217.

Sincerely,
Chelsea Adams-Cook
President, AMTA Maryland Chapter