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Maryland Board of Massage Therapy Examiners
4201 Patterson Avenue, Suite 301
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2026 SESSION POSITION PAPER

BILL NO: HB 975
COMMITTEE: Health
POSITION: Support With Amendments

TITLE: Health Occupations - Massage Therapy Examiners - Advertising

BILL ANALYSIS: When enacted, this bill will prohibit licensed massage therapists and registered massage practitioners from placing, publishing, or distributing advertisements suggesting the availability of sexual services during or as a part of massage therapy services provided. Additionally, the bill requires licensed massage therapists and registered massage practitioners to include their full names in the advertisement.

POSITION AND RATIONALE: The Maryland Board of Massage Therapy Examiners (the “Board”) supports HB 975 with amendments.

HB 975 advances the Board’s core mission to protect the citizens of Maryland by promoting transparency, accountability, and public safety in the practice of massage therapy. The bill prohibits individuals, including licensed massage therapists and registered massage practitioners, from advertising the availability of sexual services in connection with massage therapy and requires that advertisements include the practitioner’s full name. These provisions provide important protection for consumers of massage therapy services.

First, the bill helps educate the public and distinguish legitimate, regulated massage therapy practices from illicit businesses that misrepresent services. Establishments offering sexual services under the guise of massage therapy frequently employ individuals who are not properly trained or licensed, placing consumers at risk of physical harm. Clear advertising standards will help consumers identify lawful practitioners and make informed decisions.

Second, illicit businesses undermine legitimate licensees and registrants by diverting clients and failing to comply with state tax and regulatory requirements. Strengthening advertising requirements supports ethical practitioners who comply with Maryland law and professional standards.

Finally, requiring the inclusion of a practitioner's full name in advertising will significantly enhance the Board's investigative and enforcement efforts. The Board periodically receives complaints but is unable to identify the responsible individual because of the use of aliases or names that do not match those on file with the Board. This creates unnecessary delays in investigations and impedes the timely resolution of complaints. Requiring the use of the name under which the license or registration was issued will promote accountability and improve the efficiency of enforcement actions. That said, the bill's formulation of the name inclusion requirement is arbitrary, as it appears to exempt "businesses" that employ others while imposing this requirement on solo practitioners.

To provide statutory clarity, the Board respectfully requests the following friendly amendments:

1. **Strike lines 15–26 on Page 2** and replace with language clarifying that if an advertisement lists the name of a licensed massage therapist or registered massage practitioner, the name displayed must be consistent with the name under which the Board issued the license or registration.
2. **Strike subsection (F) on Page 3** to eliminate a duplicative provision in the bill.

For the stated reasons, the Maryland Board of Massage Therapy Examiners respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 975, with the proposed amendments.

For more information, please contact Sharon J. Oliver, Executive Director at 410-764-5985 or Sharon.oliver@maryland.gov, or Lillian Reese, the legislative liaison for the boards at 443-794-4757 or at lillian.reese@maryland.gov.

The opinion of the Board expressed in this document does not necessarily reflect that of the Department of Health or the Administration.