



BILL NUMBER: HB 975

TITLE: Health Occupations - Massage Therapy - Advertising

COMMITTEE: Health

HEARING DATE: 2/25/2026

POSITION: FAV

TurnAround, Inc. is the designated rape crisis center for Baltimore City and Baltimore County and a comprehensive domestic violence service provider, offering crisis response, survivor-centered advocacy, legal referrals, trauma-informed therapy, and community education. TurnAround also serves as the Regional Navigator for Baltimore County and Howard County, providing specialized services to survivors of human trafficking, and is a member of the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA), the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV), and the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force (MDHTTF).

The Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee brings together federal, state, and local law enforcement, government agencies, and nongovernmental organizations to identify and support survivors and hold traffickers accountable. Its Legislative Subcommittee—comprised of representatives from law enforcement, victim advocacy organizations, service providers, government entities, and faith-based partners—works to strengthen Maryland’s human trafficking laws, collaborate with legislators, and provide testimony on key legislation each session. On behalf of TurnAround, Inc. and the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee, we respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 975.

HB 975 strengthens Maryland’s regulatory response to harmful advertising in the massage therapy industry by (1) requiring clear identifying information in massage therapy advertisements and (2) prohibiting licensees and those acting on their behalf from using advertising channels or content that promote or imply prostitution or sexual services. These reforms support survivor safety, assist law enforcement and regulators in distinguishing legitimate providers from fronts for trafficking, and reduce the opportunities for traffickers to exploit loopholes in current law.

HB 975 amends the Health Occupations Article to direct the State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners to adopt regulations that establish standards for advertising or soliciting by licensed massage therapists and registered massage practitioners, define specific prohibited language and

content, and create procedures for reporting violations by licensees or members of the public. The bill requires that, with limited exceptions for multi-practitioner businesses, advertisements for massage therapy services include the full name and license or registration number of the practitioner providing the services. It also prohibits licensed massage therapists, registered massage practitioners, and third parties acting on their behalf from placing or maintaining advertisements that state prostitution, escort, or sexual services are available, that appear on websites known for such advertising, or that otherwise indicate or imply that sexual activity is part of the massage service. Each day that an unlawful online advertisement remains visible constitutes a separate violation, and failure to remove a noncompliant physical sign or billboard also constitutes a violation.

From our direct service experience, we know that traffickers and exploiters routinely use vague or coded “massage” advertisements to market commercial sex, recruit buyers, and conceal the exploitation of both adults and minors. Survivors of human trafficking frequently report that online classifieds and storefront signs promising “full body massage,” “happy endings,” or other sexualized services were used to normalize their exploitation, target vulnerable individuals, and mislead community members into viewing trafficking venues as legitimate businesses. When licensed massage professionals are permitted to advertise in ways that mirror these tactics, or when their advertising cannot be easily linked to an identifiable, accountable practitioner, it becomes harder for survivors to be believed, harder for communities to distinguish legitimate businesses from trafficking operations, and easier for offenders to hide in plain sight.

HB 975 helps close these gaps by requiring transparency and prohibiting explicit and coded sexual advertising within the licensed massage profession. Requiring full names and license or registration numbers in advertisements promotes accountability, facilitates complaints and investigations, and makes it more difficult for bad actors to cycle through aliases or anonymous postings. Prohibiting placement of massage therapy ads on websites known for prostitution and sexual services, and banning language or content that indicates sexual activity is part of the service, directly disrupts a common pathway for trafficking recruitment and buyer solicitation. Clear reporting procedures for licensees and members of the public further empower survivors, neighbors, and ethical practitioners to raise concerns when they see advertising that may be linked to exploitation.

For these reasons, TurnAround, Inc. and the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee respectfully urge the Finance Committee to issue a Favorable report on House Bill 975.

For further inquiries, please contact Amanda Rodriguez, Esq., Chief Executive Officer, TurnAround, Inc., and Chair, MDHTTF Legislative Subcommittee, at arodriguez@turnaroundinc.org.