



February 5, 2025

Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
East Miller Senate Building, Room 2
11 Bladen St. Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Comment in Opposition of Senate Bill 294 – Protection of Identity of Victims of Sexual Assault or Stalking

Dear Chair William C. Smith, Jr. and the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

The Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB®) is a not-for-profit organization with membership comprised of 47 massage therapy licensing boards and agencies in the United States and its territories. Our mission is to support our member boards in their work to ensure that the practice of massage therapy is provided to the public safely and competently. We do this by promoting and supporting public protection and regulatory excellence by providing education, best practices, and sharing the collective wisdom of massage therapy regulators from across the country. **The Maryland Board of Massage Therapy Examiners (Board) is a member of the FSMTB.**

Protecting victim identities in cases of sexual assault and stalking is an important goal that should be explored and pursued. While FSMTB supports the goal of this legislation, we urge the legislature to collaborate with the Board. As currently drafted, **it will create complications for the Board in that the Board already has guidelines in place to protect victim identities, and these provisions will work against their investigations.**

The Board unfortunately receives numerous complaints involving allegations of sexual misconduct by licensed massage professionals against clients. Senate Bill 294 as written, limits the Board's ability to access identifying information of adult victims from courts and law enforcement. **This limitation would hinder the Board's ability to effectively investigate, collect evidence, and prosecute cases against its licensees, inadvertently denying victims access to justice.**

While FSMTB wholeheartedly endorses the goal behind this legislation, we strongly advise the legislature **to consult and collaborate with the Board of Massage Therapy Examiners to ensure the language in this bill suits all stakeholders and does not have unintended consequences** that inhibit the Board's ability to conduct disciplinary and enforcement actions against licensees who violate the Massage Practice Act and otherwise engage in unprofessional (and in some cases, criminal) conduct.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments. Should you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact the undersigned at mlpetrine@fsmtb.org or 913-681-0380.

Sincerely,

Mai Lin Petrine, JD
Director of Legal and Regulatory Affairs