

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 42
Health
(Delegate Bagnall)

Health Occupations - State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners - Revisions

This bill authorizes an individual registered as a massage therapy practitioner by the State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners to continue to practice under their registration beyond October 31, 2026. The bill also (1) alters the educational requirements for applicants for a license to practice massage therapy who graduated from an out-of-state program; (2) clarifies which entities may accredit a massage therapy curriculum; (3) repeals the requirement that the board follow hearing provisions to impose a specified administrative penalty; (4) alters reinstatement provisions; and (5) requires licensees or registered practitioners on inactive status to submit to a criminal history records check for reinstatement. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any change in State activities does not materially affect State finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Analysis

Bill Summary/Current Law:

Licensure and Registration

Under current law, an individual may practice massage therapy in the State if the individual is either (1) licensed by the board or (2) registered by the board to practice massage therapy

in a non-health care setting. However, Chapters 705 and 706 of 2022 phase out the registered massage practitioner credential. Beginning November 1, 2026, an individual must be licensed by the board to practice massage therapy in the State.

The bill repeals this change and authorizes individuals registered by the board to continue practicing massage therapy under their registration beyond October 31, 2026. The bill also repeals the qualifications for a new registration as a massage therapy practitioner, which expired September 30, 2024. An individual may continue to practice in a setting that is not a health care setting under an existing massage therapy registration.

Under current law, by October 31, 2026, the board must convert the registration of an individual registered as a massage practitioner to a license to practice massage therapy if the individual complies with board regulations. The bill repeals the October 31, 2026 deadline for conversion but preserves the requirement that the board convert a registration to a license if a registered practitioner meets the regulatory requirements (COMAR 10.65.01.06).

Education Requirements

Under current law, to qualify for a license, an applicant must have graduated from an institution of postsecondary education approved by the Maryland Higher Education Commission with at least 750 contact hours of education in a curriculum (1) approved by the board; (2) endorsed by the Commission on Massage Therapy Accreditation (COMTA) or an equivalent entity; and (3) accredited by an institutional accreditation agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. The bill adds that a curriculum can be accredited by another entity that accredits programs offering instruction in massage therapy.

The bill also adds exceptions to the educational qualifications for an applicant who graduated from an out-of-state program in massage therapy. Such an applicant must have graduated from a program for the study of massage therapy that:

- has been approved by (1) the higher education commission of the state where the program occurred or (2) a similar entity that regulates institutions of postsecondary education;
- has been endorsed by COMTA or an equivalent entity;
- is accredited by an institutional accreditation agency recognized by (1) the U.S. Department of Education or (2) another entity that accredits programs offering instruction in massage therapy; and
- requires at least 750 contact hours that include the same areas of content as required for an in-state program.

If the out-of-state applicant does not meet the contact hour requirement, they may supplement the required hours with (1) contact hours from a board-approved program of study of massage therapy on a one-hour to one-hour basis; (2) board-approved continuing education hours on a one-hour to one-hour basis; or (3) documented evidence of completing at least 1,000 licensed, out-of-state hours of hands-on massage therapy within the immediately preceding two years.

Administrative Penalty

Under current law, each licensed massage therapist or registered massage practitioner must notify the board in writing of any change in their name or address within 60 days. Subject to hearing provisions, the board may impose a \$100 administrative penalty on a licensee or registration holder who fails to notify the board of such a change within 60 days.

The bill removes the requirement that the imposition of the penalty be subject to disciplinary hearing provisions that are otherwise required for the board to deny a license or registration, reprimand a licensee or registration holder, place a licensee or registration holder on probation, or suspend a licensee or registration holder.

Renewal and Reinstatement

Under current law, if a licensee or registration holder fails to renew, the board must reinstate the license or registration if the former licensee or registration holder applies for reinstatement within five years and meets other renewal requirements. After five years, the board may not reinstate a license or registration. However, the former licensee or registered practitioner may apply for a new license or registration by meeting the requirements for a new license or registration and any additional requirements determined by the board.

The bill removes the option for a former registered practitioner to apply for a new registration after five years (as new registrations are no longer issued by the board). Instead, a former registered practitioner may be reinstated by meeting the requirements for *licensure* in effect for a new license and any additional requirements determined by the board. Additionally, a registered practitioner on inactive status who fails to reactivate within five years may reactivate the registration only by meeting the requirements for new *licensure* and any additional requirements determined by the board.

Small Business Effect: Registered massage practitioners may continue to practice under their registration beyond October 31, 2026, rather than completing additional requirements for licensure as a massage therapist.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Health; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 23, 2026
caw/jc

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