



Board of Massage Therapy Examiners

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2023 SESSION POSITION PAPER

BILL NO: SB 216
COMMITTEE: HGO
POSITION: Support as Amended

TITLE: Massage Therapy – Definition, Registration, and Reimbursement

BILL ANALYSIS: The main purpose of SB 216 is to update the definition of Massage Therapy and repeal a provision of law that does not require a nonprofit health insurance plan, an insurer, a health maintenance organization, or a person acting as a third-party administrator to reimburse a licensed massage therapist or registered massage practitioner for any services rendered. Additionally, the bill alters the date after which the Maryland Board of Massage Therapy Examiners may issue a registration to practice massage therapy in a setting that is not a health care setting.

POSITION AND RATIONALE: The Maryland Board of Massage Therapy Examiners (the “Board”) supports SB 216 as amended.

The Board is seeking to remove a section from the statute that restricts licensed massage therapists from billing third parties for medically necessary services. No other health occupation board has this restrictive language. We are licensed healthcare providers as defined by the statute. Under other bills such as the HB 25 Public Health – Healthy Maryland Program – Establishment, the universal single-payer health bill, massage therapy is covered as a medical service.

In line with the removal of section **6-403** the Board is aiming to remove language from the definition of Massage Therapy which specifically precludes the “**treatment**” of illness, disease, or injury from the scope of practice. Massage therapy is currently ordered and accepted as part of a normal **treatment** plan(s) prescribed for patients by Physicians or other health authorities also covered under the health occupations article. Please refer to the letter from the Maryland Attorney General’s office submitted to the House Health and Government Operations Committee dated February 24, 2023, regarding this issue proposed in the cross-file bill HB 242.

Finally, the Board is seeking a one-year extension to September 30, 2024, to enable students currently enrolled in a massage therapy educational program with graduation dates beyond the date currently in statute, September 30, 2023, the opportunity to obtain a registration and to seek employment. This extension will also grant massage schools the additional time needed to obtain curriculum approval from accrediting agencies.

For all of these reasons, the Board of Massage Therapy Examiners respectfully requests a favorable vote on SB 216.

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.