

SB 419 Testimony (2026).pdf

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Position: FAV



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

DAWN LUEDTKE
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 7

February 10, 2026

The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Chair, Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Senate Bill 419, *Health Occupations – State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners – Revisions*

Dear Chair Beidle,

I write today to express my strong support for Senate Bill 419, *Health Occupations – State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners – Revisions*. This legislation represents a practical and necessary step toward modernizing Maryland’s massage therapy licensing framework by phasing out outdated registration categories and ensuring that all practitioners meet a clear, consistent licensure standard.

By revising the massage therapy licensure system to require full licensure for all practitioners rather than allowing a dual system of registration and licensure, SB 419 closes a long-standing regulatory loophole that has made it difficult for local jurisdictions to fully oversee and regulate massage establishments across the State. Under the existing structure, the less stringent registration pathway has at times created uneven standards for training, oversight, and enforcement; and has limited the ability of local health departments and law enforcement partners to distinguish between legitimate therapeutic practice and venues that may mask unlawful or exploitative activity.

Anti-human-trafficking advocates and public-safety organizations alike note that clear, robust, and enforceable licensing frameworks are a core tool for preventing exploitation and illicit enterprise. Where regulatory requirements are inconsistent or too permissive, bad actors can exploit gaps in oversight, undermining both public confidence and community safety. By

aligning educational, credentialing, and enforcement standards for massage therapy practitioners, this bill strengthens the State's capacity to protect both consumers and practitioners.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 419.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dawn Luedtke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "L".

Dawn Luedtke

Montgomery County Councilmember, District 7

SB 419 Senator Simonaire_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Kara Contino

Position: FAV

BRYAN W. SIMONAIRE
Legislative District 31
Anne Arundel County

Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



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The Senate of Maryland
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB 419 – Massage Licensing Revisions

I am Senator Bryan Simonaire presenting SB 419.

This is a consensus bill that follows up on the revisions made in 2022 to the practice of Massage therapy and the transition process by:

1. Authorizing an individual registered as a massage therapy practitioner to continue to practice beyond October 31, 2026,
2. Altering the educational requirements for applicants from an out-of-state program,
3. Clarifying which entities may accredit a massage therapy curriculum,
4. Revising the administrative penalty, and
5. Lastly, altering the reinstatement provisions including those on *inactive* status.

I have the experts here who can go into much more detail, so I won't belabor the introduction and turn it over to them and ask for Favorable Consideration.

SB 419 AMTA MD FAV Written Testimony .pdf

Uploaded by: Lisa Smith

Position: FAV

American Massage Therapy Association Maryland Chapter

February 2, 2026

Bill: Senate Bill 419/ House Bill 42 - Health Occupations - State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners - Revisions

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the committee:

Over the past decade, the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA) Maryland Chapter and the Maryland Board of Massage Therapy Examiners have collaborated extensively to enhance the professionalism, safety, and quality of massage therapy practice within the state of Maryland.

Together, we have increased the required education hours for massage therapists from 500 to 600 in 2014, and then from 600 to 750 in 2022, ensuring practitioners receive comprehensive training necessary to perform their work safely and effectively. This advancement aligns Maryland with national best practices and includes the adoption of Commission on Massage Therapy Accreditation (COMTA)-endorsed curricula for massage schools in the state.

Public safety has remained a cornerstone of our joint efforts. Initiatives have included:

- **Background Checks:** Instituting mandatory background checks for all aspiring massage therapists in 2015.
- **Fingerprinting Requirements:** Updating fingerprinting standards in 2021 to work with the Central Repository and allow the Maryland Board of Massage Therapy Examiners to receive criminal history updates promptly.
- **Establishment Licensure:** Empowering county-level governments to enforce establishment licensure requirements, bolstering oversight and regulation.
- **Aiding and Abetting Law:** Enacting the nation's first Aiding and Abetting Law to combat illegal activities within massage establishments.

The Board has demonstrated its commitment to evolving and refining regulatory standards to keep pace with the needs of both the public and the profession. Recent achievements include:

- **Recognizing Massage Therapy as Treatment:** Updating the definition of "massage therapy" in 2023 to classify it as a "treatment" under certain circumstances, further legitimizing the profession.
- **Insurance Coverage Reform:** Closing loopholes in 2022 that previously allowed insurance providers to deny coverage for massage therapy services.

The Maryland Board of Massage Therapy Examiners remains steadfast in its mission to make massage therapy in Maryland safer for the public while elevating the profession. Our collaborative efforts ensure that Maryland's massage therapists are among the most educated, knowledgeable, and professional practitioners in the field.

We hope that you will vote **FAVORABLE** on **SB 419/HB 42**, which updates language indicating requirements for massage practitioners in the State of Maryland.

We thank you for your continued support of our efforts to advance the profession and protect the public.

Sincerely,

Mark Hamilton
Board Member, AMTA Maryland Chapter

SB419 - FIN - Massage Therapy Bd - LOS.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: State of Maryland (MD)

Position: FAV



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D., Secretary

Maryland Board of Massage Therapy Examiners
4201 Patterson Avenue, Suite 301
Baltimore, MD 21215

2026 SESSION POSITION PAPER

BILL NO: SB 419
COMMITTEE: Finance
POSITION: Support

TITLE: Health Occupations-State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners-Revisions

BILL ANALYSIS: When enacted, this bill will authorize registered massage practitioners to continue practicing massage therapy in the State of Maryland beyond October 30, 2026; repeal obsolete qualification requirements for registered massage practitioners; require applicants seeking reactivation of a license or registration to submit to a criminal history background check; modify reinstatement and reactivation requirements for licenses or registrations under certain circumstances; clarify pathways for out-of-state applicants to qualify for licensure in Maryland; and repeal the requirement for a hearing prior to the imposition of an administrative penalty under certain circumstances.

POSITION AND RATIONALE: The Maryland Board of Massage Therapy Examiners (the “Board”) supports SB 419.

One purpose of the bill is to repeal statutory provisions that would prohibit individuals registered by the Board from practicing massage therapy in the State beyond October 30, 2026. Repealing these provisions ensures workforce stability and the continued employment of Maryland residents. As of January 20, 2026, there were one thousand one hundred, forty-three (1,143) registered practitioners (RMPs) who did not meet the statutory or regulatory requirements for conversion to licensed massage therapist (LMT) status.

A second objective of the bill is to repeal obsolete qualifications for registered massage practitioners. In 2022, the Maryland General Assembly enacted legislation prohibiting the Board from issuing initial registrations after September 30, 2024. *See* 2022 Md. Laws Ch. 705 (H.B. 220); 2022 Md. Laws Ch. 706 (S.B. 37). The law was subsequently amended in 2023 to extend the deadline for initial registrations to September 30, 2024. *See* 2023 Md. Laws Ch. 329 (H.B. 242); 2023 Md. Laws Ch. 330 (S.B. 216). Again, while there are currently RMPs who the Board does not want to disenfranchise if they do not want to convert to LMT status, these provisions

are no longer necessary since the Board is statutorily prohibited from issuing new RMP registrations.

In addition to the provisions regarding RMPs, from time to time, a licensee or registrant may allow a license or registration to remain inactive or non-renewed for more than five years beyond the date of status change. This bill clarifies the requirements for qualifying for a new license or registration under those circumstances.

The Board regularly receives applications from individuals who have graduated from out-of-state massage therapy education programs. The bill clearly defines licensure pathways for these applicants, providing transparency and consistency in the application process. Furthermore, by requiring that out-of-state applicants graduate from massage programs approved by a state regulatory body responsible for certifying such programs and by requiring that the out-of-state program be duly accredited, this will ensure that out-of-state applicants are held to the same standards that in-state applicants are and close a loophole that potentially would allow an out-of-state applicant to have graduated from a non-bona fide massage education program (ie., a diploma mill).

On October 1, 2016, criminal history background checks became a condition of licensure. Approximately three thousand individuals who were licensed or registered by the Board prior to the enactment of this requirement were not fingerprinted. Requiring criminal history records checks as part of the reactivation process ensures appropriate vetting of applicants and enables the Board to obtain ongoing criminal history updates through the RAP Back system.

Finally, while the Board has authority to impose administrative penalties for minor violations of the Act, current law requires a hearing before such penalties may be imposed – even where there is no genuine dispute of fact, such as failing to notify the Board of a change of address. The cost of conducting an administrative hearing far exceeds the maximum allowable penalty of \$100 for these minor infractions. Eliminating the hearing requirement in these limited circumstances promotes efficiency while preserving due process for more serious matters.

For all of these reasons, the Board of Massage Therapy Examiners respectfully requests a favorable vote on SB 419.

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](tel: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.