

Chelsea Adams-Cook, LMT

759 204th St

Pasadena, MD 21122

Cell – 410-599-6790

Email – kneadedmassagemd@gmail.com

House Health Committee

House Office Building

6 Bladen St

Annapolis, MD 21401

Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee,

My name is Chelsea Adams-Cook, and I am a licensed massage therapist in the State of Maryland.

I am respectfully request an unfavorable report on HB1527, the Complementary and Alternative Health Care Practices Act.

Licensed massage therapists are healthcare professionals who are committed to providing safe, ethical, and effective care to the public. As licensed massage therapists in Maryland, we must complete extensive education and hands-on training, pass a national examination, undergo background checks, and comply with ongoing continuing education and ethical standards set forth by the Maryland State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners. These requirements exist to protect the public.

This bill raises serious concerns for our profession and for public safety. The bill lists 26 techniques that could be practiced without licensing, formal training, certification, or standardized education. Among those listed is “bodywork.”

The term bodywork is not clearly defined within the bill. In many professional and clinical settings, bodywork is used as an umbrella term that can include a wide range of manual therapies involving direct physical contact with the body, including techniques commonly associated with massage therapy. Without a clear definition, the bill could create confusion about what practices require licensure and what do not.

This lack of clarity is already creating concern within the massage therapy community. Many licensed massage therapists and registered massage practitioners have expressed uncertainty about whether this legislation would allow individuals to perform services that resemble or are marketed as massage or bodywork without maintaining a professional license in Maryland.

Additionally, many of the modalities often discussed under the broader category of bodywork require significant training and, in some cases, professional certification or national testing to ensure practitioners are competent and the public is protected.

For example, Reiki practitioners commonly complete multiple levels of training that can range from approximately 100 to 300 hours of coursework and mentorship depending on the lineage and level of mastery. While there is no universally required national examination, many professional Reiki organizations maintain voluntary certification standards and codes of ethics.

Reflexology certification programs commonly require between 200 and 300 hours of education, including anatomy, physiology, and supervised practical training. The American Reflexology Certification Board offers a national certification exam that practitioners may take to demonstrate competency and professional standards.

Ayurveda is a complex traditional system of medicine that includes bodywork techniques such as Abhyanga. Professional Ayurvedic practitioner programs can require anywhere from 500 to over 2,000 hours of training depending on the level of certification. National certification is available through the National Ayurvedic Medical Association, which maintains educational and professional competency standards.

Craniosacral therapy is another technique that involves hands-on contact with the body and often requires extensive post-graduate training. Programs offered through recognized institutions commonly require several hundred hours of coursework and supervised practice. Some practitioners pursue professional certification through organizations such as the Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy Association or similar credentialing bodies.

These examples demonstrate that many of the practices often associated with bodywork involve substantial training, education, and professional standards. Allowing such techniques to be practiced without any clear educational requirements, licensing, or oversight raises legitimate concerns about public safety and consumer protection.

In addition to concerns about professional standards, there are also public protection implications. Maryland has worked for many years to clearly distinguish legitimate massage therapy practices from illegal businesses that misuse the terms “massage” or “bodywork” as a cover for illicit activity. Weakening regulatory clarity in this area could make enforcement more difficult and undermine the progress that has been made to protect both consumers and licensed professionals.

I have significant concern that HB1527 could unintentionally undermine the regulatory framework that ensures massage therapy and related hands-on therapies are practiced safely, ethically, and by properly trained professionals.

For these reasons, and to protect both the public and the integrity of licensed bodywork professions in Maryland, I respectfully urge the committee to issue an unfavorable report on HB1527.

Thank you for your consideration,

Chelsea Adams-Cook, LMT