



**BILL NUMBER:** HB 374

**TITLE:** State Acupuncture Board - Revisions

**COMMITTEE:** Finance

**HEARING DATE:** 2/11/2026

**POSITION:** FAV

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The Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force (MDHTTF) is Maryland’s coordinated, multi-disciplinary response to human trafficking, bringing together federal, state, and local law enforcement, government agencies, and nongovernmental organizations to identify and support survivors and hold traffickers accountable. The Legislative Subcommittee includes members from law enforcement, victim advocacy organizations, service providers, government entities, and faith-based partners, and works to improve Maryland’s human trafficking laws, partner with legislators, and testify on key legislation each session. On behalf of the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee, we respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 374.

HB 374 clarifies the definition and scope of “manual therapies” within the practice of acupuncture and ensures that these therapies, including acupressure and related pressure-based techniques grounded in East Asian medical theories, fall squarely within the licensed practice of acupuncture. By tying these services to licensure and regulatory oversight, the bill reduces the ability of bad actors to use vague or unregulated “bodywork” or “wellness” language as a cover for illicit activity, including sex and labor trafficking in purported health and personal care businesses. The Legislative Subcommittee supports clear statutory definitions in sectors where traffickers have historically exploited ambiguity to hide exploitative practices.

HB 374 also prohibits employing an individual to practice acupuncture without a license and makes it unlawful to aid or abet the unauthorized practice of acupuncture, with criminal and civil penalties for violations. These provisions are especially significant from an anti-trafficking perspective because trafficking operations often rely on layers of facilitators—owners, managers,

landlords, and front-facing “employers”—who attempt to distance themselves from direct contact with clients while profiting from exploitation. Holding both unlicensed practitioners and those who knowingly employ or enable them accountable creates an important tool to disrupt business models that can be used to facilitate trafficking in massage, bodywork, and similar settings.

The bill’s tiered penalty structure for those who violate licensing requirements, including enhanced penalties for repeat offenders, provides regulators and law enforcement with stronger leverage to address chronic, noncompliant businesses whose patterns of conduct may signal deeper exploitation. In combination with existing anti-trafficking statutes, these penalties can support more effective investigations by encouraging cooperation, prompting closer scrutiny of suspect establishments, and reducing the number of high-risk venues where traffickers can operate. The Legislative Subcommittee views robust, enforceable licensing frameworks in high-risk industries as a core component of a comprehensive strategy to prevent and reduce human trafficking.

By requiring the State Acupuncture Board to make proof of license renewal available, HB 374 facilitates timely verification of credentials by employers, regulators, and community partners. Easy access to accurate licensing information helps distinguish legitimate acupuncture practices from operations that misuse the language of acupuncture or manual therapy while operating outside the law. This transparency can aid law enforcement and regulatory agencies in identifying locations that warrant closer inspection and can support public awareness efforts by giving consumers a concrete way to check whether a provider is properly licensed.

The Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee supports HB 374 because it strengthens professional standards in the acupuncture field while reducing opportunities for traffickers and exploitative operators to misuse health and wellness settings. Clear definitions, enforceable licensing requirements, and meaningful penalties for those who attempt to circumvent them are essential tools in Maryland’s ongoing efforts to prevent trafficking, protect survivors, and hold perpetrators accountable.

For these reasons, the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee respectfully urges the Finance Committee to issue a Favorable report on House Bill 374.

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