

Dear Rebecca,

I'm writing on behalf of the Alaska Massage Therapy Licensing Coalition to answer some of the concerns you raise in your letter to Representative Olson and let you know why the coalition decided upon certain issues. Your input is valuable, and while the coalition is far along in developing the best approach for statewide licensing, I'd like you to know that the door remains open for providing input, asking questions and for ongoing dialogue. I hope this letter helps address some of your concerns.

First, I thought it might be helpful to clarify that once the board is established it has the ability to make "rules". Rules are not set in stone like statute. Rules allows for more flexibility and change at the board level, this gives us the ability to truly govern ourselves. If a rule seems to be hindering therapists or recipients of massage therapy it can be changed. It would be a goal of the board to promote the industry, not hinder it. Your help in that process could be valuable.

I see that you are an ABMP member and for that I applaud you! I've had the pleasure of working with ABMP and their Government Relations staff throughout the last two years as we circulated drafts of the bill and received feedback from therapists statewide. Being that we were/are working closely with ABMP I know that their Government Relations department sent out the information on the survey and all coalition meetings and communications, some people however reported it going to spam and if this happened to you I sincerely apologize. The coalition is still open to talking about concerns as we move forward in this process.

Continuing Education

As of now the statute does not require continuing education. The coalition thought it best served for therapist in Alaska that the board, once established, decide if this were a necessity. One of the perks of establishing a board is that it allows us as therapists to make "rules", which can be changed, governing our own profession. Input from coalition meetings suggest that if there were a "rule" established requiring continuing education for licensure renewal that most therapists agree it should be minimal and allow for all credits to be met online so it does not become hindering in the costs related to travel being that our state is geographically challenged and it can be expensive to fly in and out of state regardless of your location. I commend you for furthering your education and bringing educators such as James Mally to Alaska! I've taken one of his classes and it was wonderful! I believe that establishing a board would bring more therapist like him to our state making it easier and more affordable to attend classes!

Insurance

While the majority of Alaskan massage therapists wish to have this option, there are some therapists who have no desire to bill insurance. Through the coalition process we found that most therapists in Alaska work under Chiropractors and would choose to be self-employed if they had the ability to bill insurance directly. It is every therapist's right to be able to practice their profession to its fullest and the coalition believes in giving every therapist opportunities within the profession. Because we are not licensed and do

not have a board we are hindered in our capabilities to practice as well as in expanding our businesses. Though this may not apply to you directly you as well as the rest of Alaska's massage therapists should still have it as an option.

Costs

Our expected number of therapists is similar to the Social Work Board, and these fees have ranged in the \$200-300 range for a two year license. The number of \$460 is not the anticipated figure. Assuming we stay at the targeted \$200-300 range for licensing, other cost involved would be CPR which is offered free through local police departments and can range from a \$20 online course to upwards of \$120 dollars for in class instruction.

There is no requirement for liability insurance, and members of the coalition felt it should be left up to the individual to choose whether or not to carry this. The only other associated fee at this point is a one-time fingerprint submission and a background check at the cost of \$20 every two years. So as of now projected costs are within \$350 every two years. The average rate of massage is \$60/hr to meet the associated fees a therapist would only have to perform roughly six massages over a two year period. The costs of licensing are also a tax deduction. Great consideration was taking when assessing the costs and if it would hinder therapists. Most feel that the benefit of maintaining a license out-weights the fees associated.

HB187 is an issue the coalition is aware of and having an established board would give us a voice at the table regarding this separate issue.

There were lengthy discussions by coalition members on whether or not to include an apprenticeship program and these were the determining factors for not including in the current bill:

- The coalition looked at the language for the states that allowed apprenticeships and decided that it was not in the best interest to have this in statute for the following reasons:
 - Inconsistent education
 - 113 contraindications if not properly trained can do harm to the body
 - Expansive grandfathering that makes it easy to apply for initial licensure
 - 500hr program can be met online eliminating burden on rural citizens.
 - Pursuing massage education is no different than a rural person leaving their town to pursue education for dental hygiene or medical assistant.
 - The board could approve an apprenticeship program that was registered through the Post-Secondary Education Commission

From one therapist to another I am so glad that you have come forward with your concerns and please know that if you have any further questions you wish to discuss the coalition is open to hearing them.

In Health and Wellness,

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