

My name is Patricia Collins. I have been a full time massage therapist in Juneau for 11 years. I have a business license, liability insurance and pay appropriate sales tax. I do not see HB 328 increasing the fees that I charge to my clientele. The costs associated with the continuing education are costs I already gladly pay. The additional cost of state professional licensure, I consider minor. HB 328 brings us into closer aligned with the massage regulations that other states currently have. It may provide therapists with the ability to directly bill health insurance for services. It will also assist in providing the public with some assurance that their massage therapist has basic training in safe and sanitary practices. I support the passing of HB 328 with three amendments.

The first amendment I suggest is in **Section 08.61.030 (3), Qualifications for licensure**. Currently the bill states education must come from a board approved "school". I believe the words "**or board approved apprenticeship program**" should be added after the word school. The US Secretary of Education considers massage therapy a vocational trade. Board approved apprenticeship is a common route of education for vocational trades. Even though there are hundreds of massage schools in the country, COMTA, the federally recognized accrediting agency for massage therapy, has only 61 accredited programs in 27 states. All massage therapists hope that the education that we receive will be respected in the future or in other states but at this point there are no guarantees. Both Hawaii and Florida have board approved apprenticeship in their state legislation. Our state has many communities that will never be large enough to support a massage school. If our legislation does not include board approved apprenticeship future therapists will have no choice other than relocation for 6 months to a year of their life in order to receive training. This will be an option for some but it will not be an option for others. The lack of apprenticeship will limit who will be able to enter the field in the future.

The other amendments I suggest are related to safety of the public. It is important that persons performing massage and / or bodywork have basic knowledge of safe and sanitary practices. There are some who say that this bill is to regulate massage and the exempt modalities are a different field which they categorize as bodywork. For many reasons I feel this split is illogical for our state. Exempt modalities are taught in the same massage schools as non-exempt modalities and therapists mix modalities considering all of them as part of their massage practice. The public, in general, will not consider the different modalities as separate & will assume they all have some kind of oversight. Our state does not have a large enough population of massage therapists and bodyworkers to successfully support two different boards. I believe that with two simple amendments we will be able to give the board that is created by this bill needed oversight of modalities that pose the greatest risk to our public.

Section 08.61.080 (10) - This section exempts Rolfing and structural integration. The Rolf Institute is a well known bodywork school with very high standards. In order to advertise Rolfing you must be a student or graduate of the Rolf Institute. A person who is educated in principals that were developed by Ida Rolf but has not gone to the Rolf

Institute is considered to practice structural integration. Unfortunately, there is no federal oversight as to who teaches, what is taught, who performs or what is performed under the umbrella term “structural integration”. The way this bill is currently written there will be no state oversight of structural integration. I believe we should remove item (10) or rewrite it to apply to students and graduates of the Rolf Institute only.

Section 08.61.080 (12) - This section lists a broad range of modalities that may be classified as energy work and Asian bodywork. Some of these modalities do not use pressure applied to the body but some do. Item (7) in this same Section (08.61.080) already exempts persons performing techniques that do not pressure or manipulate soft tissue in the human body. To specifically list non-force modalities in item (12) is a redundancy. I am further concerned about this exemption because there are weekend workshops and short term programs in the listed modalities that are open to anyone in the public to take. There is no federal oversight regarding who teaches, what is taught, who takes the classes or what overall safety and sanitation knowledge a practitioner has. With the current wording of the bill there will not be any state oversight of potentially harmful bodywork modalities. I recommend removing item (12) from the proposed bill. Non-invasive modalities will remain exempt under item (7). Modalities that involve pressure or manipulation of body tissue will have oversight.

I thank everyone for the time that they spend on this piece of legislation and the development of the Alaska State Massage & Bodywork Board.

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