

Dear Labor & Commerce Committee,

I am writing to encourage you to pass a concurrent resolution, or similar legislation, which repeals Executive order 127, an order that seeks to dissolve the Alaska State Board of Massage and send its duties to the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, Division of Corporations, Professional and Business Licensing. This board is comprised of five members, four of whom are massage therapists, and one is a public member. These members are strictly volunteers, which is a cost savings to the State of Alaska.

The current Board structure serves the interest of public safety and without the Board oversight the increased likelihood of the illegal sex trafficked individuals will increase.

1. The department's absorption of the Board's duties, by newly trained or inexperienced license examiners, increases the likelihood of sex trafficked individuals or sex offenders obtaining a valid massage therapy license.
2. Increase in government costs due to the newly hired consultants (for expertise the staff does not have but the Board does), staff, equipment, and associated costs required to perform the duties of the current volunteer Board, as well as:
 - a. Increased application processing time if the department assumes the duties.
 - b. Lack of expertise identifying fraudulent applications.
 - c. Less personnel to research fraudulent schools.
3. The importance of the Board oversight ensures massage therapists possess the skills, abilities, and knowledge to provide a safe and legitimate healthcare service.
4. Board licensure is not simply an arbitrary credential; it is recognized in the healthcare industry and has many benefits including:
 - a. Greater Legitimacy.
 - b. Job opportunities.
 - c. Greater online visibility.
 - d. Networking opportunities.
 - e. Continuing education requirements.
5. Board members are experts in their field and volunteer their time and train peers with historical knowledge, and they are quick to identify fraudulent applications and deny applications seeking to place sex trafficked individuals in our state.
6. Without a Board and being a self-funded program, licensees will most certainly see their fees increase.

Please support a concurrent resolution, or similar legislation, and repeal Executive Order 127.

Please pass a concurrent resolution that repeals Executive order 127. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Cheri Zepp, Licensed Massage Therapist
Sole Proprietor – Cheri's Therapeutic Massage