

Hello Madam Chair and members of the committee,

My name is Volker Hruby, I'm the president of the American Massage Therapy Association - Alaska Chapter. Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. I'm a lifelong Alaskan, have been a massage therapist for 13 years, and have worked in the spa industry, medical massage, and private practice. We, the AMTA Alaska Chapter, represent a large number of massage therapists in Alaska. I am writing this testimony in support of House Bill 110.

It should be noted that any letters of opposition to HB 110, are from over a year ago, and relating to exemption language that has since been removed.

The new version of this legislation:

1. Requires the massage board to adopt regulations governing massage therapy establishments, in addition to individual therapists. This will give the authorities the tools they need to shut down operations of human trafficking and prostitution that try to use massage therapy as a front. The state board learned from the FBI in 2015 that there are at least 35 businesses in Anchorage alone, that are under watch for human trafficking. Regulating massage establishment, means that the owners of establishments can be held accountable.
2. It increases the minimum course of study for licensure from 500 hours to 625 hours, which is the current national minimum standard. 625 hours is based on the Entry-Level Analysis Project. ELAP is a research project initiated by the Coalition of National Massage Therapy Organizations in March 2012. Every national massage organization was involved. The project wasn't published in time to use for the original push for licensure in the 2014 legislative session. The project goals were to define knowledge and skill components of entry-level education and recommend the minimum number of hours schools should teach to prepare graduates for safe and competent practice in the massage profession. Every massage school in Alaska is 750 or more hours. Raising the minimum to 625 won't affect current Alaska licensed massage therapists, but would ensure that new therapists, or ones traveling from out of state, meet the national minimum standard.
3. It changes the requirement of safety education covering bloodborne pathogens from 4 hours to 2 hours, which is the national standard. In massage schools, therapists already have up to dozens of hours of bloodborne pathogen training,

the 2 hours is meant as a refresher for massage therapists who have been out of school for a while before getting state licensure.

4. It changes the requirement for the public member of the board, to allow the person to have previously served on a state board. There has been trouble filling the seat, and this would make it easier to fill.
5. And finally, it compels the fingerprinting requirements be conducted every 6 years instead of every 2 years. This reduces the fee and paperwork burden on licensees, yet still gives periodic checks to keep criminal elements out of our profession.

Since the passage of legislation 4 years ago establishing the Board of Massage Therapists and establishing statutes and requirements for licensure of massage therapists, the need for some minor modifications to that statute have come to light. Those modifications are contained in this legislation.

Madam Chair, and committee members, every piece of this housekeeping bill improves our massage industry in Alaska, and helps fight crime. We urge you to move this bill from committee.

Thank you.

Volker B. Hruba  
American Massage Therapy Association - Alaska Chapter President