

March 12, 2013

Dear Representative Jinkins,

Associated Bodywork & Massage Professional (ABMP) is a professional membership association representing more than 82,000 members nationwide, including more than 2500 in Washington. I am writing to let you know of concerns we have with HB 1981, a bill to require massage therapy establishments to become licensed.

ABMP generally does not support massage establishment licensing because frankly, there are very few legitimate public safety concerns as they relate to the practice of massage therapy. There are no chemicals used when providing massage, nor are there any other sanitary reasons to impose this level of regulation upon professionals.

This said, we do know there are issues with "massage" establishments serving as a front for illicit behavior such as prostitution and human trafficking. I am assuming that the desire to crack down on illicit activity is the real purpose and intent of this bill. However, even with the exemption for Licensed Massage Practitioners (LMP's) who are sole proprietors, and other licensed medical professionals, **it is unclear whether LMP's who employ other LMP's will be exempt as well.** It seems they are not since the sole proprietor was specifically excluded. Can you clarify this? I would like the bill to include a clear exemption for all currently Licensed Massage Practitioners. Licensees have already been screened and their background check completed. There is no reason for them to have to also obtain an establishment license.

I am also very concerned with the language in Section 3, which seems to discourage and discriminate against any large spa or clinic that is not associated with a national massage franchise. How would a legitimate business person who is not affiliated with a national franchise open, or remain in business? This is very concerning since, as a professional association, we want our members to have diverse employment opportunities and it seems this provision would decrease the possibilities.

Thank you for your consideration of ABMP's concerns. I would very much appreciate some clarification to the above concerns so I can inform our 2500+ members in the state.

Sincerely,

Jean Robinson, Government Relations Director