

Andrea Altman - Testimony on S.220
House Government Operations Committee
August 21, 2020

I am here today to testify on the Massage Therapist regulation provisions in S.220.

I am the Owner and Director of the Green Mountain Massage School in Hyde Park. This is my 8th year of operation and I have had 88 students graduate from my program, and currently have 14 students for this upcoming year.

I was part of the Board of Directors of Vermont Chapter of the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA-VT) for many years, and have attended all of the meetings that OPR held in regards to this matter. I also came to testify before the House Committee of Government Operations in 2018.

I feel that licensure (as opposed to registration in S.220) is very important for many reasons. This renewed interest in regulation came on the heels of the horrible incident that occurred in Middlebury. We should not have had to wait until Vermonters were victimized to afford protections to them. This is a profession that is already licensed in almost every other state in America!

We can all remember a time when seat belts were not mandatory, yet now are an accepted and welcomed part of public safety. I hope that one day we can look back and see how dangerous it was to not license Massage Therapy.

Every client and student that I speak to about this topic is shocked there is no licensure for Massage Therapy in Vermont. **Vermont is the only state on the East coast without licensure.**

States that started with registration, have found it to be less than comprehensive, and later enacted licensure. This was primarily due to disciplinary and accompanying public safety concerns, and the lack of adequate over-sight. For the sake of public safety, someone should not be able to just “declare” themselves a massage therapist.

Importance of Minimum Educational Requirements

It is very important for Massage Therapists to have a strong foundation of knowledge. It allows them to safely work within their scope of practice for a variety of issues that clients may present. Each state has different educational requirements for licensure. The Entry-Level Analysis Project (ELAP) lists 625 hours as the National average. (ELAP is a research project initiated by the Coalition of National Massage Therapy Organizations in March 2012.)

For the states that do require licensure, the current breakdown is:

500 – 599 hours	24 states
600 – 699 hours	15 states
700+ hours	8 states

Regionally, it ranges from 500 hrs. in Maine, to 650 hrs. in Massachusetts, to 1,000 hrs. in New York.

My school provides 630 hours of training and has a strong focus on Anatomy, Physiology, Kinesiology, Ethics, Sanitation, Pathology, and Business - in addition to a variety of hands on modalities such as Swedish and deep tissue massage, Reflexology, Hydrotherapy, and Thai massage.

In order to renew a license, I support comprehensive educational programs, passing an examination, and completing CEU's (continuing education units). These requirements are similar to most, if not all, licensed professions in Vermont and do not impose a barrier to entering the Massage Therapy profession. Education, passing a competency exam, and continuing education are all very important steps not only to enter the profession, but to succeed in the field of Massage Therapy as skilled and knowledgeable Massage Therapists. These pre-requisites to regulation will ensure that Massage Therapists in Vermont are well trained in Anatomy and Physiology, Pathology, Ethics, Professional Conduct, Sanitation, and hands on massage techniques.

Cost of Massage Schools

The cost of massage school, ranging from 9-11 months, is from \$6,800-\$8,999 for the programs. The massage schools in Vermont include:

- Green Mountain Massage School – Hyde Park VT
630 hours/9 months
\$6,800
- Balance Massage School – Waterbury VT
700 hours / 10 months
\$7,750
- Wellness Massage Center and Institute – St. Albans VT
750 hours / 11 months
\$8,500
- BodySoul Massage and Bodywork School – St. Albans VT
625 hours/ 10 months
\$8,999

Massage Therapy is a growing field and becoming more integrated into traditional health care treatment. Nationwide, the number of jobs for Massage Therapists will increase 22% from 2018 to 2028.

I believe it is time for Vermont to license the Massage Therapy profession, and ensure public protection as the chief priority. I ask that you amend bill S.220 to require Licensure as S.270 originally was introduced. Thank you for your consideration of this crucial issue.