

Good morning. My name is Sheryl Rapée-Adams. I have a master of science in organizational leadership and management, more than 1,500 hours of professional bodywork training, and 26 years' experience as a professional massage therapist. I began practicing in Vermont in 1997 with my husband, Chris Adams, a massage therapist for 37 years. Our Montpelier practice, Massage Vermont LLC, is temporarily closed during the pandemic.

Chris and I thank OPR, Senator Hardy, and the committee for your work and strongly support the provisions in S.220 to regulate Vermont massage and bodywork practitioners with registration for the reasons Senator Hardy, Ms. Hibbert, and Ms. Barquist gave. Chris and I have worked and testified on this issue beginning with the 2010 Sunrise Review, and have been reviewing the results of massage therapist regulation in 46 states. This has affirmed our support that registration for all touch practitioners, not licensing only for massage therapists, will protect Vermonters.

Licensing only massage therapists would invite the confessed Middlebury voyeur to stop calling himself a "massage therapist" and become, say, an "energy worker."

Whereas we are pleased with S.220's comprehensive plan for registration of Vermont massage and bodywork practitioners that protects Vermonters without hindering Vermont touch professionals.

Despite anecdotal claims of harm to clients by unlicensed massage practitioners, we can acquire \$1 million in liability insurance for as little as \$100 a year. An insurance industry data expert Chris spoke with said claims for harms caused by massage were so few as to be statistically undetectable. The vast, vast majority of complaints against all kinds of bodyworkers concern those who abused their position as occurred in Middlebury.

To address Representative Gardner's question, it is unsurprising that most states license massage therapists since licensure's main proponent is the American Massage Therapy Association, which funds state-by-state lobbying for its own licensing bills and collects substantial revenues from massage therapists who must work under them. Yet AMTA is only one of several organizations Vermont touch practitioners can join. As of today, AMTA's website shows only 72 Vermont members, a small fraction of Vermont's estimated 900 to 2,000 bodywork practitioners. Even the small AMTA Vermont chapter is deeply divided; licensure opponents among them alerted me that this bill was on the move.

My interest is ensuring that professional regulation protects Vermonters and will do more good than harm. Regulation in the form of registration for all Vermont touch practitioners, as provided for in S.220, is the likeliest path to that outcome.

Thank you for your work to advance the helping and healing practices of massage and bodywork in Vermont as you protect Vermonters, including we in the bodywork profession.

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