

To: Senate Government Operations Committees

From: Paul Erlbaum

Re: S.270 Massage Therapists

Date: February 11, 2020

I write to both support and suggest an amendment to S.270, relating to the professional regulation of massage therapy.

I understand most massage therapists support licensure of their profession. It makes good sense. At the same time, I suggest expanding the exemptions in the bill as introduced.

I am a practitioner of the Feldenkrais Method. It is a form of somatic education that includes directing students in movement explorations with spoken words and, in individual sessions, with slow, gentle hands-on movements of a person's skeleton. The individual remains fully clothed. A Feldenkrais practitioner must have a minimum of four years initial training, continuing education, and annual certification by the Feldenkrais Guild of North America.

I provide free individual Feldenkrais sessions at Peoples' Health and Wellness Clinic in Barre. The practice especially benefits elders who report improved balance and ease in movement. If the bill passes as written, I would be required to cease my service to Peoples' Health and Wellness. I would likely fit under the bill's definition of massage therapist, and I would not meet the educational requirement.

Many, if not most states licensing massage therapists, exempt individuals who do not hold themselves out as massage therapists, but provide "alternative methods that employ contact." That phrase is from Colorado's statute which expressly exempts the Feldenkrais method, Rolfing, the Trager approach, Hellerwork, reiki, reflexology, and more. Here's a link to the exemption portion of Colorado's statute: <https://law.justia.com/codes/colorado/2017/title-12/health-care/article-35.5/section-12-35.5-110/> Here is a link to exemptions in several other state statutes: <https://www.feldenkraisguild.com/government-relations>

I look forward to your action on this bill.