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**Professional Massage Therapists Opposing S.270
and Supporting a Massage Therapist Registry**

Respectfully to the Senate Government Operations Committee:

Thank you for hearing from me today. Below in item I, I address key massage therapist regulation considerations; item II speaks to protecting Vermonters against criminals such as sexual predators.

As I mentioned, my husband Chris Adams and I practice in Montpelier. I have been a private practice massage therapist for 24 years, Chris for nearly 40 years. Before moving to Montpelier, we had a practice together in Rutland for 16 years.

With no requirement to do so, I graduated from an accredited massage school with 900 hours of training and have taken hundreds more hours of continuing education. I have worked and been licensed in Maine and New Hampshire. I dropped my licenses and even my national board certification (NCBTMB) because I was fulfilling all the requirements except criminal background check without anyone telling me to do so—and because no client ever asked.

I have been a certified-level member of Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (ABMP) since 2006 when I left the American Massage Therapy Association due to AMTA's relentless lobbying for state regulation.

I. AMTA represents a fraction of Vermont practitioners, yet dominates the push to license Vermont's massage therapists.

- AMTA's "find a massage therapist" webpage shows 71 Vermont members out of the 891 Vermont massage therapists AMTA estimated in its 2015 Sunrise Application, though far more might be going uncounted.
- Vermont's massage therapists are deeply divided about licensing, as are AMTA's own members.
- AMTA is one of several professional bodywork organizations that Vermont practitioners may join. Many Vermont practitioners remain unaffiliated, a valid choice.
- AMTA is the only such organization whose mission includes pushing massage licensure into every state, and only one maintaining paid lobbyists for this purpose. This is why so many states license massage therapists, and it's why the licenses are similar state to state. S.270 would produce significant revenues in the form of AMTA membership dues, tuition for required classes that AMTA happens to offer, and malpractice insurance premiums.
- **On the matter of harm, massage therapists can acquire practitioner insurance for around \$100 a year with \$1 million to \$2 million in coverage because massage-related injuries are so rare as to be statistically insignificant and are almost entirely anecdotal.** Negative massage effects are usually minor, resolve quickly, and would not have been prevented or remedied by licensing. Chris and I have been researching this for nearly 15 years, including consulting with health insurance industry experts, and can find nothing to refute this.

- S.270 would reduce clients' access to massage practitioners and eliminate well-paying, viable work opportunities for Vermonters. Skilled, caring practitioners are shut out when their work doesn't fit the AMTA mold and for those who are unable to succeed at, or simply can't afford the time and money for, the type of schooling and hoops S.270 would require.

II. Licensure does not prevent abusers, like Roger Schmidt in Middlebury, from committing their first violations against massage clients. But mandatory registration could bar them from continuing to practicing massage and committing a second offense.

In 2019, a licensed South Carolina massage therapist who violated his clients had worked at or owned multiple wellness centers and called massage and yoga his "life purpose." A headline read: "Hilton Head massage therapist secretly filmed client, police say. There are likely more victims."

<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/crime/article236231428.html>

In 2019, a licensed massage therapist was arrested for raping a client in Massachusetts, which requires applicants to undergo fingerprinting and criminal background checks. Again, police believe there are more victims.

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2019/10/17/licensed-massage-therapist-charged-with-raping-client-north-reading/qbiqL6PbTG8lBcyKunQkDP/story.html>

Licensing "massage therapists" creates a walk-around for bad actors. Massage therapists are just one type of many Vermont touch practitioners. Vermont practitioners offer many more kinds of touch modalities than massage.

1. Bodywork practitioners treat consumers with modalities including

Acupressure, Amma, Aston-Patterning, bioenergetics, the Bowen Technique, craniosacral (or cranial-sacral) therapy, Core Energetics, dermoneuromodulation (DNM), energy work, Hakomi Therapy, Healing Touch, Hellerwork, the Hemme Approach, lomilomi, Looyen Work, myofascial release, neuromuscular integration, neuromuscular therapy, Ortho-Bionomy, polarity therapy, reflexology, reiki, Rolfing and structural integration, the Rosen Method, Rubenfeld Synergy, shiatsu, soma work, Somatic Experiencing, soul retrieval, Thai bodywork, Touch for Health, the Trager Approach, trigger point therapy, tui na, visceral manipulation, Watsu and other aquatic bodywork, and Zero Balancing

2. Practitioners offer techniques, classes, and workshops during the normal course of which they touch consumers to align, adjust, relax, and otherwise assist them, including

The Alexander Technique, choreography, contact improv, dance, dance-movement therapy, ecstatic dance, the Feldenkrais method, martial arts, performing arts, Phoenix Rising, tai chi, yoga, yoga therapy, and the myriad offerings helping consumers with coordination, flexibility, gait, movement skills, pain relief, personal development, postural improvement, relaxation, self-defense, self-expression, and stress reduction

Please contact me any time. I remain available to help the legislature protect Vermonters.