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**Regulation of Massage Therapists
House Government Operations Committee
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Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Vermont Chapter of the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA-VT). A few years ago, the Legislature passed decided to regulate Massage Therapists and other touch professionals through Registration, instead of Licensure (AMTA-VT had requested Licensure). I am here today to talk with you about why Licensure is the appropriate level of regulation. In addition, we have some concerns related to the fees associated with Registration.

Regulation - Licensure

The American Massage Therapy Association advocates for fair and consistent professional licensing in all 50 states, promotes public education on the efficacy of massage therapy, fosters professional ethics and standards, and supports the advancement of clinical massage therapy research. We represent more than 104,000 members nationwide, and more than 340 in Vermont.

The Vermont Chapter of AMTA strongly advocated for licensure in 2020. At that time, the profession was not regulated by the state. The Legislature decided to go in the direction of Registration instead of Licensure, with Rules to be promulgated. Note that the Rules, to our knowledge, have yet to be promulgated.

In light as what we see as the ineffectiveness of Registration to achieve the goals of professional regulation, AMTA-VT continues to strongly believe that Licensure is the appropriate level of regulation, joining 45 other states, as well as the District of Columbia, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and Puerto Rico, which all *license* massage therapists.

Vermont remains behind the curve in the licensure of a profession that is recognized by the Department of Defense and the Department of Veteran's Affairs as an effective treatment for chronic pain. Similarly, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has recommended, in their plan benefit guidance, therapeutic massage provided

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by state licensed massage therapists to be a supplemental benefit within Medicare Advantage plans.

Mandatory licensure is essential for public protection, as well as title protection for massage therapists. A state-mandated license would require a minimum standard of state-specific requirements that would include **a clear scope of practice, determined set of educational hours/experience, study approved curriculum, and passing a psychometrically valid examination.** Registration is little more than simply a registry, not an effective regulatory tool to ensure public health and safety.

Fees

Our initial fee for registration for Massage Therapy Registration in 2020 was \$90. The fee recently increased to \$275, taking most of the profession by surprise. Massage therapists are now expected to pay the same fee as other professions which are *licensed* by OPR. In addition, we are paying significantly higher fees than the renewal for many other *licensed* professions, including:

- Social workers, OTs, and PTs (\$180)
- Cosmetologists (\$155)
- Radiologist therapists and technicians (\$175)
- Unarmed private investigators (registration - \$95)

The biennial renewal fees of \$275 are not commensurate with the level of regulation and are overly burdensome for Massage Therapists.

Thank you.