

Testimony in Support of Licensure of Massage Therapists
House Government Operations Committee
Laura Morley, Massage Therapist
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My name is Laura Morley and I have been a Massage Therapist since 2000. I was educated and licensed in the State of Florida. I held my license in Florida for 8 years before returning to live in the Northeast. I currently have a practice in North Bennington and teach a Massage Therapy program in Bennington.

I support **licensure** of both massage therapists and massage therapy establishments.

Since there are no standards of education in Vermont, I have modeled my Massage Therapy program after the national minimum of educational hours (500) so that my students can sit for the MBLEx even though that is not required in Vermont. My students are deeply immersed in Anatomy, Physiology, and Pathology, as it is imperative that a Massage Therapist know the important structures in the body to avoid endangering their clients. We often encounter pathologies that would need adjustments to the therapy we are providing or, at times, massage must be avoided entirely. Bottom line - we need standards of education.

It is irresponsible that Vermont is one of the only states left to not require licensing for Massage Therapists. Massage therapists are part of the continuum of health care in Vermont. In Florida, we were regulated by the Department of Health (since 1990). I was always proud that my license looked just like my mother's - she was a critical care nurse.

If it's OPR's job to protect the public, they are not fulfilling their role – related to ensuring that Massage Therapists are properly trained **and** doing all they can to prevent sex traffickers from operating in the name of Massage Therapists/Massage Therapy establishments. This can **only** happen with **licensure**.

Things I have experienced working in a state without licensure: in 2012 the FBI raided 2 illegitimate businesses using Massage Therapy as a front for prostitution. Unfortunately those raids did not result in arrests and still exist today. At the time, I spoke to county attorney Erica Marthage and asked if Massage therapists were licensed in Vermont, would that have helped with prosecuting these individuals and she responded without hesitation yes.

As we are a big state for 2nd homes, I am constantly fielding calls from people who reside in other states here on vacation. When I can't get them an appointment, I offer a referral to another reputable therapist. I quickly explain that they wouldn't just want to find a therapist via Google as we are not licensed in Vermont and have no standards of education. The general public doesn't know this, assume we have some sort of credentialing, and are shocked and nervous after I share this information.

Bottom line, Massage therapy is health care. That's not an opinion, it's a fact. We're muscle therapists and Vermont should be licensing us to **Establish standards of education, create a scope of practice, and require continuing education**.

Respectfully,
Laura Morley