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**Regulation of Massage Therapists
Senate Government Operations Committee
April 23, 2025**

My name is Hercules Liotard. I am a board member of the Vermont chapter of the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA-VT). I am a 36-year veteran Massage Therapist, practicing in Williston, Vermont.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of AMTA-VT. AMTA represents more than 104,000 members nationwide, and more than 340 massage therapists in Vermont.

Today we would like to provide you with (1) some background on regulation of massage therapists, (2) unreasonably high fees, and (3) a short amendment to Sec. 13 of H.472.

1. Background - Regulation of Massage Therapists

For years, AMTA- VT has been advocating for licensure of massage therapists. A few years ago, in part as a result of an incident involving sexual assault and massage therapy in Addison County, Sen. Hardy introduced a licensure bill. The Legislature, at the request of OPR, decided to regulate Massage Therapists and other touch professionals through Registration, instead of Licensure. AMTA-VT continues to strongly encourage licensure. Note also that Rules were to be promulgated after Regulation passed, but, to our knowledge, Rules have yet to be promulgated.

We recognize that there is not enough time during this session to work on changing Regulation to Licensure, but we hope you might consider this change next year. 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. Registration does not allow for acceptances of Medicare.

Mandatory licensure is essential for public protection. 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 an examination that tests the skills and knowledge of a massage therapist**. Registration is little more than simply a registry; it is not an effective regulatory tool to ensure public health and safety.

2. Unreasonably High Fees

The biennial renewal fee of \$275 is not commensurate with the level of regulation of massage therapists. This is the same fee as some **licensed professions** are paying, while some **licensed professions** pay less than what massage therapists are paying:

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

3. Requested Amendment to Sec. 13 of H.472

Section 13 directs OPR to consider regulating massage therapy establishments. We would like to ensure that there are some specific stakeholders included in the stakeholder group, as well as ensure that licensure is an option to consider. As such, we suggest the following amendment:

Sec. 13. OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL REGULATION; REPORT; MASSAGE THERAPY ESTABLISHMENTS

On or before November 15, 2025, the Office of Professional Regulation, in consultation with interested stakeholders, **including representatives from the Vermont Chapter of the American Association of Massage Therapists, the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, the Department of States Attorneys and Sheriffs, and other Vermont law enforcement agencies,** shall submit to the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations proposed legislation for the regulation, **which may including licensure,** of massage therapy establishments, as defined in 26 V.S.A. § 5401(2)(A).