

H.623 Massage Therapy Licensure
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My name is Heather Chadwick. I am the President of The Vermont Chapter of the American Massage Therapy Association. I am a Board-Certified Massage Therapist through the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork. who's been practicing for almost 20 years, and is currently running my own business. I am going to speak to the need for massage therapy licensure as a part of the continuum of care in the world of health care. There are others from the law enforcement/prosecution community who are interested in testifying and are more well-versed in criminal justice than I am – so I will leave that to them.

There is no question in my mind that the state of Vermont needs to license (not register) massage therapists and massage therapy establishments.

Vermonters are increasingly seeking massage therapy for health care reasons. They are coming to our practices with a variety of complex health conditions and trauma. They often turn to us as muscle specialists who help them when other methods seem too invasive or when other medical treatments have failed. It is imperative for massage therapists to be educated in massage – to learn the skills to practice massage safely – and the contraindications so as to not harm clients. It is essential for the health and safety of Vermonters.

Massage therapists work alongside physicians, physical therapists, chiropractors, acupuncturists, and other health care professionals. Some of us work in hospitals, and some work with children. We are seen as part of one's health care team. Yet all the other qualified professionals in the team are licensed... but not massage therapists.

Vermont's current massage registration requires zero regulations or requirements of professionalism for our industry. Yes, OPR has investigated some horrible cases, but they wait until bad things happen, rather than get ahead of the situation by requiring standards for how we practice massage therapy in the state. And... that also begs the question – how many bad things have to happen before it is determined that there is a “danger to the public”? How many people have to get hurt before OPR can see that they should license massage therapists? How many trafficking cases do we have to have in Vermont before we can say enough is enough? Do we wait until someone is seriously hurt because someone who simply calls themselves a massage therapist, but has no education or training, hurts someone because they have no clue as to what they are doing?

Vermonters deserve better. They should be protected by the state entity that is charged with ensuring that professionals meet state requirements. There must be a standard of education, training, liability insurance, background checks, and ethics before someone can call themselves a massage therapist.

Let me leave you with these questions – Would you want your massage therapist to be licensed - – educated, trained, have liability insurance, pass a background check? Do you believe licensure will protect the public? I hope you join me in answering yes. Thank you for your time.