



Position Statement

NCBTMB's Position on the Recent Massage Bill Passed in Pennsylvania

HB2499 – important legislation licensing the massage industry – has been signed into law in Pennsylvania. NCBTMB supported the vast majority of the language in the bill, and we are gratified that the Commonwealth will join 39 other states in regulating the profession that is so important in all our lives. We congratulate Pennsylvania legislators who worked on the language for many years.

It is, however, unfortunate that the bill was hastily pushed through the Senate with concession language designed to serve certain parties rather than serving the best interests of massage therapists in the state. **That is why NCBTMB did not support language we knew to be damaging to the profession.** Although the bill passed, it is still important everyone understands what that language will mean to therapists in Pennsylvania.

First, an ominous amendment was added at the last minute stipulating that ***massage therapists will not receive mandatory worker's compensation, auto or health insurance reimbursement enjoyed by other licensed health care professionals in the state.*** This language is so disadvantageous that many therapists currently or potentially reimbursed by worker's comp, auto and health insurance companies could see those reimbursements come to an end completely, potentially affecting their livelihoods by destroying their businesses. These adverse consequences will likely affect many massage therapists, and come as a result of unexplained 11th hour concessions by AMTA and its Pennsylvania chapter.

Moreover, other important parts of HB2499 were not created with the best interests of massage therapists in mind. Specific language was quietly crafted to allow special interests to gain unfair regulatory advantage in the testing arena as well. For example, ***the bill allows any exam that is psychometrically sound to be considered for licensure, as opposed to a single, proven, peer-reviewed NCCA accredited exam program that has been the national standard for the massage profession for the past 16 years and represents the highest standards of excellence.***

In addition, HB2499 allows ***massage therapists who have been in practice for 5 years or more to be licensed without any education.*** This opens the

door to illicit businesses and uneducated therapists that could bring potential harm to clients who unknowingly use their services.

HB2499 has the potential of **eliminating an important third party payor obligation enjoyed by other allied health care professions, and also allows massage therapists to be licensed at lower entry-level standards than the majority of states throughout the country.** This is both risky and unsafe for the public health and safety as well as for existing practitioners.

Any one of the above provisions is cause for serious concern. But taken together, **they could prove extremely damaging to the entire profession in Pennsylvania.** At their worst, they could establish a national precedent that opposes and retards everything the massage profession has worked so hard to achieve over the last two decades. That is something NCBTMB cannot ignore.

Fortunately, we can still strive for a better outcome. To ensure Pennsylvania does not fall below testing and programmatic standards of excellence accepted across the U.S., NCBTMB pledges to work diligently in the coming months to make sure the interests of the massage profession are upheld. Our goal is to work closely with the future Pennsylvania Board to help identify best standards of practice and to assist by offering the benefit of our experience as the nation's leader in test administration and support programs for the massage industry.

NCBTMB examination programs have been the consistent national standard of excellence for over 16 years, featuring professional, highly skilled test development, monitoring and continual advancement. Testing and professional support programs are the specialty of the NCBTMB, and are the primary focus of what it does. Through NCBTMB's testing auspices, the profession has not only remained safe, but has grown and flourished. It is our hope that Pennsylvania will see its massage profession grow and prosper under exceptional testing and standards of practice that are used in the majority of the states as well.

As we endeavor to pursue our mission of excellence in the Commonwealth and in other states, we thank you for your continued support.