

Esteemed legislators,

I am a massage therapist in practice for 32 years, currently licensed in both Lawrence, Kansas and in Colorado, I sit on the City of Lawrence Bodywork Advisory Board, and I was one of the practitioners who helped shape our comprehensive local ordinance in Lawrence for bodywork and massage therapy.

I oppose the current version of Senate Bill (SB) 531.

I strongly recommend that the Federal and State Affairs Committee not pass the current version of this bill and not consider it or any other form of the same bill again.

There are myriad, detailed reasons why I oppose the bill, but I will highlight only two in this letter.

First and foremost, I urge legislators instead to work with bodywork professionals from multiple disciplines to craft a comprehensive licensing process for all Kansas bodyworkers, not just for massage therapists.

Clawing back the negative effects of passing a bill that does not comprehensively cover all forms of massage and bodywork will be much more difficult than passing a comprehensive bill from the beginning.

Bodywork ordinances are designed first and foremost to protect the public, and are vitally necessary to promote the health and welfare of massage and bodywork professionals and their clients.

SB 531 in its current form does not regulate movement practitioners, energy practitioners, structural integrators, or reflexologists.

Regulating all types of bodywork discourages human traffickers from using massage therapy and bodywork as a guise for selling sex services.

We don't need human traffickers suddenly calling themselves Rolfers or reflexologists because our massage-focused state ordinance didn't address Rolfers and reflexologists in a more comprehensive bill.

I also strongly oppose SB 531's requirement of 24 hours of continuing education in a renewal period.

Most state boards and voluntary certification organizations took on this arbitrary and artificial requirement in the late 1990s without ever examining its actual efficacy or real-time return.

Requiring a set number of CEUs each renewal period does not guarantee ethical, competent practitioners; it only guarantees more of our hard-earned money going into the pockets of the people who provide CEU classes.

I recommended against CEU requirements being included in the ordinance in Lawrence, instead trusting our professionals to train further in their areas of specialization at will.

When I choose to expand my professional knowledge base and skillset, I prefer to be free to attend as much or as little training as suits my needs and budget rather than being forced to attain a certain number of hours on a rigid renewal schedule.

I currently take an intensive, specialized training about every five years. I find that this schedule allows me to save money toward my education over time, spend my money wisely, and learn exactly what I want and need to learn in order to enhance my bodywork practice.

I will note that that Colorado does not require CEUs. Colorado began their licensure process with massage therapy registration and then transitioned into full licensure, all without a CEU requirement.

Practitioners licensed in Colorado didn't suddenly stop taking CEUs; rather, we were given the freedom to choose when, where, and on what we wanted to spend our money to further our careers.

This freedom to choose when and where we train in our professions should speak strongly to fellow Kansans who believe in less government interference in our daily lives.

I do however recommend two to four hours of CEUs in Ethics, First Aid/CPR, Universal Precautions and understanding human trafficking be included as a requirement every renewal cycle when crafting more a comprehensive massage and bodywork ordinance.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Alison Dishinger, LMT, CYT, MMT  
Lawrence, Kansas