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The Honorable Daniel Hawkins, Chairperson

House Committee on Health and Human Services

Statehouse, Room 521-E

Topeka, Ks. 66612

Hello,

My name is Jessica Phoenix from Lawrence KS and I am writing you as a member of the Freestate Coalition, in opposition of House Bill 2123, the licensure of Massage Therapy.

I have been a Massage Therapist my entire life. I have been practicing as a professional since 2007.

Licensure for massage therapy is damaging to the economical success of independent massage therapists, and especially to those who are struggling single parents, such as myself.

I do not currently belong to a massage association (which would be required by licensure), simply because it is an unnecessary expense. I have found liability insurance for my practice through a private provider, and it costs HALF of what ABMP requires.

I paid the couple hundred dollars a few years back to get nationally certified through NCTMB and I can honestly say that a multiple choice quiz on random ethics and anatomy has nothing to do with my practice. Even after 9 months of massage school, If I wouldn't have memorized the study book, I can guarantee I would not have passed that exam! Clients had never heard of my certification and they didn't even ask if I had been to school until AFTER my session, when they wondered "how did you get to be so good at what you do?" Nationalized testing and certification is nothing but a revenue producer for corporations. It DOES NOT HELP THE SUCCESS OF MASSAGE THERAPISTS.

I have training from PCI in Lawrence and the \$12,000 student loan debt to prove it. Massage School is not necessary for all people, and the skills that I utilize in my practice could have been taught by an experienced friend or mentor. If I had known this, I would have taken an apprenticeship, any day, instead of undergoing the costly struggle of balancing massage school & a full time job. But I knew I had a gift and I did what I thought I had to do to "become a massage therapist".

Red Tape KILLS SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT.

Red Tape DOES NOT HELP OR PROTECT MASSAGE THERAPISTS

I lived and worked in Monterey California, the land of red tape. I paid for national certification, I paid for a membership to ABMP, I paid for a city massage permit including a background check and fingerprinting, I had loans from a Massage School education. Not one of these things helped me succeed. My love for helping people, the passion I have for helping others feel their best...THAT is what keeps clients coming back to me. All that red tape just set me back financially, and if I wouldn't have had the help of my parents, I never could have opened a business out there. The costly red tape left many of my colleagues with little to no option to work independently.

“PROTECTION OF THE PUBLIC” & “LEGITIMACY”

Massage Licensure is being pushed as a way to protect the public, while serving the massage therapist as well, BUT IT DOESN'T. (I have been practicing professionally, off and on since 2007 and not once have I dealt with a claim of hurting or endangering a client) -----BUT! While operating in California, I received countless phone calls, emails of people trying to see if I was “legitimate” or not. (people wanting sexual services) In both CA and KS I have been sexually harassed by phone, email and in person by men. I have had to kick men off my massage table for groping themselves, groping me, and making lewd gestures. I even had an evening stalker who tried to push himself through my massage office door, demanding that I see him and that he “had good money”. I struggled so long with this harassment that I cried weekly and feared going to work. I was afraid to answer the phone and afraid to book clients because I felt unsafe in my own studios. Eventually, after months of operating in both Monterey, and Lawrence, “word” must have got around that I was IN FACT LEGITIMATE, and the harassment tapered off. My point here is, at the time, I spent all the money necessary on all the same things required by this proposed massage bill, but NOT ONE DOLLAR SPENT, NOR ONE PAID LICENSE OR CERTIFICATION protected ME from the PUBLIC!

“HUMAN TRAFFICKING”

There is absolutely NO WAY that the introduction of massage licensure will stop this unspeakable act. Those poor people who are victims of this crime need to be protected and there needs to be a dialogue separate from the business of Professional Massage Therapy, as this field of work is used as a FRONT, just as many other business are. There is absolutely NO REASON that the two should be in the same conversation.

Bodywork is a selfless career. Massage Therapists love what we do and we do it because we want to make others feel good. We don't discriminate. Our services are available to anyone. We are a struggling, juggling population, filled with women and men who have families to provide for and most often carry 1 or more part, or full time jobs in addition to massage therapy, just to make ends meet.

The only people getting “rich” from massage therapy are the corporations such as AMTA, who consistently push for massage legislation. These corporations own the schools, own the tests, own the insurance, and own the corporate chains that WE are supposed to fork money over to every time a bill passes. It sickens me.

The massage Licensure presented by corporate massage industry is written for the benefit of them and them ONLY. We are virtually one of the last free states, and there is proof that licensure has hurt the opportunity for individuals in other states. In fact, this will actually COST THE STATE MONEY in the first few stages. Let's not allow this to happen!

Thank you for your time and thank you for your opposition to Licensure of Massage Therapy in Kansas.

Sincerely,

Jessica Phoenix