

**131st General Assembly Legislative Priorities**

American Massage Therapy Association—Ohio Chapter

*February 2015*

*There are more than 10,000 licensed massage therapists (LMT’s) in Ohio today. Massage therapy has been licensed by the State Medical Board of Ohio for nearly 100 years. Massage therapy has been proven to improve health and wellness and is often used to help patients with rehabilitation following a surgery or health incident. LMT’s are becoming more accepted in organized medicine and new models of care delivery, such as the medical home. AMTA-Ohio is leading the charge to improve the practice of massage therapy and the overall health of all Ohioans. To meet these goals, we plan to work towards the following goals in the 131st General Assembly.*

**Advertising of Massage by Unlicensed Individuals**

In the 130th General Assembly, AMTA-Ohio successfully added language to House Bill 130 that prohibited the advertising of massage using sexually suggestive words and images. HB 130 was a billed aimed at curbing the demand for sex trafficking in Ohio. Many of these criminals use massage practices as fronts for illegal activity. In Ohio, it is not a requirement that an individual be licensed in order to operate a massage business. We would like to pass a broader prohibition so that only those individuals who are LMT’s may advertise massage. This is very much in line with protections afforded to other healthcare providers.

**Sales Tax Exemption for Licensed Massage Therapy**

LMT’s are the only healthcare providers who are required to collect and remit sales tax; the only exception is if they are working under a referral or prescription from a physician. Massage therapy can provide important wellness benefits as Ohio moves towards a more prevention-based healthcare system. To preserve parity with other healthcare providers, and across all massage therapy services, LMT’s should be fully exempt from the state sales tax. This change would not dramatically impact state revenues, but would open up access to massage therapy for many more Ohioans.

**Non-Discrimination in Healthcare**

One the biggest hurdles that many Ohioans face when seeking massage therapy services is insurance reimbursement. Most insurance plans do not cover massage therapy, even when a physician prescribes it or recommends that a patient see an LMT. We recommend that Ohio adopt a non-discrimination law that would allow LMT’s to perform covered services when those services fall under the massage therapy scope of practice. A similar law was included in the Affordable Care Act and is credited with drastically increasing access to massage therapy and other important health and wellness services.

**Portability and Reciprocity**

Despite being the first state to license massage therapy, Ohio has become a difficult place for LMT’s from other states to come to and practice. Currently, only LMT’s who have practiced for 5 years in another state or who have met education standards substantially similar to Ohio standards can obtain a license without taking another licensure exam or additional classes. Ohio should revise its portability standards to recognize a combination of education and experience that many LMT’s have and do more to tear down hurdles.

**Massage Therapy Awareness Week**

Many Ohioans are not familiar with the benefits of massage therapy or understand the differences between licensed and unlicensed practitioners. From a health and wellness standpoint, massage therapy can help prevent injuries and help patients recover from them. From a public health and safety perspective, it is important that consumers understand the dangers of going to unlicensed individuals for massage services. We hope to pass legislation that would name the 3rd week of October “Massage Therapy Awareness Week.”