



CAMEL — California Massage Education League

<http://www.ramblemuse.com/camel/>

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Dear Sacramento County Supervisors and Staff,

In considering a new ordinance regulating massage, there are things that you should know about the profession you are impacting. The Bureau for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education (BPPVE) lists 225 schools offering massage programs. Additional massage programs are offered at general colleges and universities. These schools both serve the large geographical area of California and also serve a diversity of student and community needs. Programs that are great for a person straight out of high school are likely not the best fit for someone making a mid-life transition while juggling existing job and family responsibilities. Some take classes not to practice massage but to serve community care-giving needs. As a result of the public demand for massage services, the Associated Bodyworkers and Massage Professionals (ABMP) estimates that there are now about 28,000 massage practitioners in California.

Public demand for massage services is why we exist. Massage is personal care, health care, and small business. Among the things we address are both stress and low back pain, maladies estimated to cost the U.S. public hundreds of billions of dollars annually. The U.S. public spends between four to six billion dollars annually, seeking the relief from pain, soreness, and stress that massage delivers.

As educators and small business people, we can not afford to ignore changes in regulation that could undercut our economic viability. It is crucial to us that our massage schools and our practices remain economically viable. It is crucial to us that that we are able to practice in conjunction with and in proximity to other health care providers. It is crucial to us that we can provide services in health clubs, spas, and hair salons without bringing hardships in facility or recordkeeping requirements to our employers and contractors. To ignore changes negatively impacting the massage profession would mean that we won't be here tomorrow to serve our students and communities. It is much to our advantage to work together. I urge you to please take the time to better understand our profession.

I want to briefly touch on the issues of accreditation of schools and of national certification. There are two categories of state-approved schools offering massage training. General colleges and universities fall under the oversight of the Department of Education. Community colleges in particular are increasingly offering massage programs. State-approved private schools are under the auspices of the BPPVE. Not counting multiple campuses, only 29 of the BPPVE schools are accredited. Requiring an accredited school as a prerequisite to licensing would have a devastating impact on single-owner schools.

National certification is a highly controversial topic within the massage profession. ABMP has published two editorials highly critical of the NCTMB in *Massage & Bodywork* within the last six months. An online poll taken by *Massage Today* in October 2003 had only 7.5% of respondents indicating that they believe the NCTMB to be a reliable tool to evaluate knowledge and skills of practice. Given that medical literature and insurance statistics show an extremely low likelihood of harm from massage, national certification provides little entry-level benefit to the public. Requiring the NCTMB would ultimately ill serve Sacramento County and the California public.

In closing, I want to again remind you what we are about. Massage is personal care, health care, and small business. Thank you for your time and attention.

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