



February 11, 2026

Representative Hans C. Wilz, Chair
House Subcommittee on State Government
Iowa State Capitol, 1007 E. Grand Ave
Des Moines, IA 50319

RE: HSB 671 - Massage Establishment Licensure

Dear Chair Wilz and Members of the House Subcommittee on State Government:

The Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB®) is **writing in support of HSB 671** which would create licensure for massage establishments in the state of Iowa. FSMTB is a not-for-profit with membership comprised of 47 massage therapy regulatory boards and agencies in the United States and its territories. The mission of FSMTB is to support its member boards/agencies in their work to ensure that the practice of massage therapy is provided to the public safely and competently. The Iowa Board of Massage Therapy is a member of the FSMTB.

There are currently 22 states¹ that have some form of regulation for massage establishments and more states are increasingly adopting this tool. **First, massage establishment licensure is an important tool for protecting both the consuming public and licensees.** Establishment licensing provides minimum health, hygiene, and safety standards and **can close the loophole that may currently allow establishments to provide space within which unlicensed individuals may practice.** It can also close the regulatory gap of licensed therapists stating that their lack of compliance with standards is because the business owner isn't complying. Also, through establishment licensure, states can require a criminal background check on establishment owners/responsible managers, holding establishment owners to the same standards as licensed massage therapists.

Second, due to the unique nature of the practice of massage therapy (one client and one therapist in a private room), the profession has unfortunately become associated with illicit massage businesses (IMBs) and sex trafficking. These IMBs are storefronts that put on the façade of a legitimate massage business to provide unlawful commercial sex services. **Implementing massage establishment licensure is one vital step in the fight against IMBs and human trafficking.** It adds another tool to protect the public and will help identify and filter out IMBs.

Some states have chosen to leave massage establishment regulation to local cities and municipalities. This, however, creates a patchwork approach that IMB's exploit – they are shutdown in one municipality and move next door. **This patchwork, or whack-a-mole approach allows bad actors (human, sex and labor traffickers) to merely relocate with little to no consequences.**

According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, sex trafficking is the primary type of human trafficking, and illicit massage is the third largest market for sex trafficking (<https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/statistics>). The Network (www.thenetworkteam.org), a nonprofit

¹ Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, South Carolina, Utah, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, West Virginia

organization dedicated specifically to combatting the illicit massage industry, **estimates that there are at least 15,000 IMBs nationwide and is a \$5 billion industry.** Data from the Network indicates that nearly 100 IMBs are currently operating in Iowa (And this is likely and underestimate!) Because IMBs operate within a much larger criminal network, Iowa is especially vulnerable due to its geographic proximity to Minnesota and Kansas, who currently do not regulate massage therapy.

If the legislature determines that massage establishment/facility licensure is needed to protect the public and combat IMBs and human trafficking, **FSMTB believes statewide massage therapy establishment regulation is preferable to the patchwork local regulation currently in place.** This also benefits the businesses who wish to have multiple locations in different cities/municipalities, as they would not then be subject to differing standards and rules and duplicative fees and costs, all of which can lower the burden to own a business.

Please consider FSMTB a reliable and credible source of information, comparative data, and best practices regarding the regulation of the massage therapy profession. Should you have any questions about the FSMTB or any of the above information, please feel free to contact the undersigned. Thank you for the opportunity to bring this information to you.

Sincerely,



Mai Lin Petrine, JD

Director of Legal and Regulatory Affairs

mlpetrine@fsmtb.org