

**Remarks of State Representative Keith McCall before the House Professional
Licensure Committee
House Bill 2499-Massage Therapy Licensure
June 2, 2008**

Good morning, I would like to express my appreciation to Chairman Sturla for holding this morning's hearing on House Bill 2499. Additionally, I would personally like to thank Nancy Porambo, who has been the true champion on this issue for years, for all her hard work as well as the Pennsylvania Physical Therapy Association for their hard work in coming to a compromise on this important legislation. Since a compromise has been reached, it is my hope that this bill will be favorably reported from this committee and considered by the House of Representatives in the near future.

Massage has become widely accepted as a means of helping people stay healthy and feel good. It relieves stress and tension, and lowering stress and tension is one way people can improve their overall health. Massage therapists work at resorts or spas as well as in health care settings. Massage therapy should be recognized and regulated by the state.

The bill would license massage therapists under a new State Board of Massage Therapy. Applicants would have to have a high school degree or equivalent. In order to be certified, they would have to have a minimum of 600 hours of in-class training. The training would also cover HIV and related risks, as well as CPR. Anyone applying for a license would have to pass an exam administered by a qualified professional testing organization approved by the board. The application of anyone addicted to drugs or alcohol, or who was sentenced as a result of a felony conviction, will be rejected.

As the practice of massage continues to grow, licensure is necessary to set educational standards within the profession and to ensure that practitioners are practicing with the best interests of consumers in mind.

Right now, anybody in Pennsylvania, no matter what their level of training might be, can say "I'm a massage therapist" and treat people without any standards of care or state oversight. Allowing anyone to set up shop claiming to be a massage therapist is a problem for both consumers and for credible massage therapists. Some reputable massage therapy procedures are being shut down in areas of the state because people are holding themselves out as a 'massage therapist' and using this title as a cover to engage in prostitution and other related crimes. These people, and others who do not have the proper training and techniques, could damage the health of their clientele and the

reputation of massage therapy as a profession. State licensure would help local officials weed out those individuals because most of the time they won't meet the training and education requirements necessary to be licensed.

It is important to note that 38 other states and the District of Columbia recognize the practice of massage therapy. Massage therapists have been actively pursuing licensure in Pennsylvania at least since 1969. During the legislative session of 1971-72, Senate Bill 213 resulted in a veto by former Governor Shapp. Primarily his veto was predicated on the fact that the legislation would not place the State Board under the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Professional and Occupational Affairs and his belief that such a business didn't require formal licensing at that time.

House Bill 2499 is the strongest licensure bill that has been drafted since that time. This is the fourth session in which I have introduced this evolving legislation. Licensure is supported by a broad group of body workers and consumers who utilize massage therapy and consider it an important aspect of their respective wellness plans. The Department of State believes that massage therapists should be licensed in order to protect the public from unscrupulous practitioners. As the practice of massage therapy continues to become more popular and more widely used, I believe it is imperative to regulate this type of health care to further protect consumers.

The regulation of massage therapy is long overdue in Pennsylvania. I believe that licensure of massage therapists will help boost our state's economy and allow more practitioners to stay and practice in the Commonwealth rather than move to a neighboring jurisdiction that recognizes the practice. Thank you.