

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1875

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, March 25, 1997

Title: An act relating to updating terminology in chapter 18.108 RCW.

Brief Description: Updating terminology in chapter 18.108 RCW.

Sponsors: House Committee on Health Care (originally sponsored by Representatives Skinner, Carlson, Radcliff, Cody, Murray, Hatfield and O'Brien).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 3/19/97, 3/25/97 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Deccio, Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Benton, Fairley, Franklin, Strannigan and Wojahn.

Staff: Rhoda Jones (786-7198)

Background: Massage involves the external manipulation or pressure of soft tissue for therapeutic purposes. Massage therapy includes massage and other specified massage techniques.

There is a need to clarify whether massage includes the practice of somatic education. Somatic educators use non-intrusive touch to relax chronic muscular tension and increase physical and emotional awareness. It can include fitness training, movement to improve cognitive abilities, and other body work affecting posture, alignment and body integrity. Some forms of somatic education are trademarked and include training through specialized education programs and completion of classroom hours as a prerequisite for obtaining trademark status.

The Department of Health (DOH) and state Board of Massage considered the question of whether persons engaged in the practice of somatic education are required to be licensed under the Massage Practice Act. An Attorney General's Opinion advised the DOH that somatic education does not constitute massage as defined by law.

The Legislature referred the question for study under the Sunrise Review Act. The Board of Health found that the practice of somatic education does not need to be regulated, as there was no demonstrable evidence of potential or real public harm. On the other hand, DOH recommended that the profession be certified under its own title. Both the state Board of Massage and DOH found, however, that somatic education did not constitute massage and recommended its exemption from the Massage Practice Act.

Summary of Amended Bill: Massage therapy involves massage for educational as well as therapeutic purposes. Specified massage techniques are no longer included in the practice of massage: effleurage, petrissage, tapotement, vibration, nerve strokes, nor does it include genital manipulation. Massage includes the massage techniques of gliding, kneading, shaking, and facial or connective tissue stretching.

The trademarked practice of somatic education, as defined by the Secretary of Health, is exempt from licensure under the Massage Practice Act.

The Department of Health must monitor the practice for any effects on the public health and safety, and report to the Legislature by December 1, 1999, with any findings and recommendations.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The striking amendment makes technical corrections to the statutory language referring to somatic educators.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The language in statute needs to be updated. Somatic educators don't want to be regulated as though they are massage practitioners.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Steve Boruchowitz, Department of Health; Jeff Larsen, Washington Somatic Educators; Melanie Stewart, AMTA/Washington Chapter.