
Health Care & Wellness Committee

HB 1189

Brief Description: Concerning exemptions from the massage therapy law.

Sponsors: Representatives Short, Cody, Schmick and Kloba.

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Defines "somatic education" for purposes of the somatic education exemption from the massage therapy law.

Hearing Date: 1/17/17

Staff: Alexa Silver (786-7190).

Background:

A person may not practice or represent himself or herself as a massage therapist without being licensed by the Department of Health (Department). A massage therapist is an individual licensed to provide massage therapy, which is a health care service involving the external manipulation or pressure of soft tissue for therapeutic purposes. Massage therapy includes techniques such as tapping, compressions, friction, Swedish gymnastics or movements, gliding, kneading, shaking, and facial or connective tissue stretching.

A person who completes a somatic education training program approved by the Secretary of Health (Secretary) is exempt from licensure as a massage therapist. To be approved, the Secretary requires a somatic education program to be a professional organization with a permanent administrative location that oversees the practice of somatic education training. In addition, the program must have standards of practice, a training accreditation process, instructor and practitioner certification processes, and a code of ethics or code of professional conduct.

The Department completed a sunrise review of somatic education in 1996, recommending that somatic practitioners be subject to certification but exempt from licensure as massage therapists. The sunrise review used the following basic definition: "[S]omatic education addresses the

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person in relationship to movement, awareness, learning and the environment. Touch, verbal interaction, and movement are used to increase perception of existing and alternative postures and patterns of movement, and to improve functional abilities. This interactive approach may be used for education or therapeutic purposes."

Summary of Bill:

For purposes of the exemption from the massage therapy law, "somatic education" means:

- using touch, words, and directed movement to deepen awareness of existing patterns of movement and suggest new possibilities of movement;
- using minimal touch over specific points of the body to facilitate balance in the nervous system; and
- using touch to affect the energy systems or channels of energy of the body.

"Somatic education" includes, but is not limited to, the practice of Ortho-Bionomy, the Feldenkrais method of somatic education, the Trager approach, the Bowen technique, and polarity therapy.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.