



amta
american **massage therapy** association®

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March 14th, 2022

TO: Kansas Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare

RE: Senate Bill 531 *Enacting the massage therapist licensure act to provide for regulation and licensing of massage therapists.*

Dear Senate Committee Members,

We are writing on behalf of the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA), to advocate for Senate Bill 531 (SB 531), a Bill to regulate the practice of Massage Therapy in the state of Kansas. AMTA is the largest non-profit, professional association serving massage therapists, massage students and massage schools. Established in 1943 and numbering more than 95,000 members, AMTA works to advance the profession through ethics and standards, the promotion of fair and consistent licensing of massage therapists in all states, and public education on massage therapy health benefits.

46 states and the District of Columbia have enacted statewide regulation for massage therapy. Only Kansas, Minnesota, and Wyoming remain unlicensed, with California currently in a voluntary certification status with no legally defined scope of practice. All three unlicensed states currently have massage legislation pending during this 2022 legislative session.

SB 531 would result in a uniform scope of practice, place Kansas on par with neighboring states and could also reduce the administrative and financial burdens massage therapists currently face from the patchwork of regulations requiring them to comply with multiple city ordinances and regulations across the state.

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Importance of Licensure

Licensure provides assurance to the public by setting minimal qualifications and competencies for safe entry-level practitioners. Additionally, background checks would provide another level of protection for the public by setting massage therapists apart from those who seek to corrupt the good name of massage. SB 531 seeks to set the following standards to bring Kansas in line with the other 46 regulated states:

- Minimum standard of state-specific requirements that include a clear scope of practice, 625 hours of education, study approved curriculum, and passing a psychometrically valid, entry-level licensing examination.
- The state license must be kept current, and any continuing education requirements must be met at each renewal cycle.
- Offers public protection as currently anyone in Kansas can claim that he or she is a massage therapist regardless of their actual training, length of experience or competence without fear of legal repercussion.
- Provides means of filing a complaint/grievance with an empowered state regulatory body to enforce sanctions.
- Protection against individuals hopping to different municipalities/unincorporated areas if they injure someone or behave unprofessionally and incorporation of a mechanism for enhanced liability protection for both practitioners and clients.

In lieu of a state license, some cities and municipalities in Kansas require a local massage license for practitioners. This model becomes expensive and overly-burdensome for legitimate massage therapists. A statewide license would offer protection of both the public as well as educated and well-trained massage therapists. Licensure would also address massage therapists who have had their license revoked in another state or have a conviction relevant to the practice of massage therapy.

Massage Therapy and Health Care

Massage therapy has a growing presence within the US healthcare system. Massage therapy has been singled-out as an effective non-pharmacologic approach to pain management, as shown by a significant body of clinical research, and supported by the

National Institutes of Health (NIH), the American College of Physicians, The American Academy of Family Medicine and The Joint Commission. The Mayo Clinic, MD Anderson Cancer Center, Duke Integrative Medicine, the Cleveland Clinic and Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, among other institutions, have integrated massage therapy into patient care for multiple conditions. These agencies and organizations require or recommend that massage therapists be state licensed.

Massage therapy is also now being utilized by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to treat the spectrum of pain in veterans (establishing GS-5 through GS-9 positions for state licensed massage therapists), covered as an optional supplemental benefit for state licensed massage therapists through multiple Medicare Advantage plans and has been a focal point of testimony on the efficacy of massage therapy before the United States Senate. Under the current system, Kansans are deprived of choice as Medicare Advantage plans can only reimburse for massage therapy provided by a state licensed massage therapist.

The following chart demonstrates a range of conditions treated by these massage therapists as part of a comprehensive integrative approach, including mitigating the overuse of opioids:

Chronic Pain Management	Behavioral Health Treatment	Care For Rehabilitation/ Physical Training	Acute Medical Treatment
Back Pain	Anxiety and Stress	Performance training/ injury treatment	Cancer management
Neck and Shoulder pain	Depression	Ergonomics and job- related injuries	Post-operative pain
Headache	PTSD	Cardiac rehab	Lifestyle diseases
Carpal tunnel syndrome	Substance use disorder recovery	Joint replacement surgery	Maternity and newborn care
Osteoarthritis		Scar management	
Fibromyalgia			
Hospice			

There is significant evidence supporting the inclusion of massage therapy for many important patient health treatments, including those for chronic pain management, behavioral health treatment, rehabilitation/physical training and acute medical conditions. Incorporating massage therapy into approaches for pain management, and as an

integrated complement to some pharmacological approaches, can help many suffering from both chronic and acute pain.

We respectfully request that you support Senate Bill 531 and we thank you for your time and attention to this issue. Please feel free to contact us should you have any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James C. Specker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a distinct "C." before the last name.

James Specker
AMTA Director, Industry and Government Relations
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