

Government Relations Report

Respectfully Submitted: Lynn Marie Kutz, LMT – Chair

** Proactive legislation effort approved by membership to be re-introduced early 2018 vs this spring. National office is implementing several programs that will strengthen our ability to pursue the changes: creation of a Human Trafficking Task Force, a new “Volunteer HUB” online for chapter to chapter support, creation of a legislative advocacy website for members.

** Updating list of local “Massage Establishment Regulations” in force throughout Wisconsin

** 2017 Assembly Committee on Regulatory Licensing Reform is meeting to roll back regulation and continuing education for professions. Several bills have been introduced affecting Cosmetology and Barbering, Social Workers, and therapists. We encouraged members with legislators on the committee to contact them requesting that massage/bodywork regulation not be rolled back. By being proactive in hopes no legislation would be introduced that we would then need to fight.

<http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2017/committees/assembly/1742>

<http://www.amtawi.org/news/2017/03/01/government-relations/please-act-now-to-protect-wi-massage-licensure-and-school-regulation/>

** SB43 / AB47 the “Trustworthy Credentials Bill” has been introduced which would make it a criminal offense to lie on license application for any profession. Rep. Scott Allen reached out to the chapter for comment. The Chapter Board voted unanimously to convey our support of the measure.

<https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2017/proposals/ab47>

** Will Neitzel, Governor Scott Walker’s Senior Policy Advisor, reached out to the chapter for comment on a “Statement of Scope”, a change to Admin Code on MTBT 7.02(3) proposed by the Massage Therapy and Bodywork Therapy Affiliated Credentialing Board that would clarify the language on the continuing education requirement deadline for massage therapists, without changing the policy. The Chapter Board voted unanimously to convey our support of the measure.

** The Proposed 2017-19 Biennial Budget (Assembly Bill 64/Senate Bill 30) includes provisions to:

Eliminate the Massage Therapy and Bodywork Therapy Affiliated Credentialing Board (MTBT) replacing it with one board of multiple professions. Eliminate mandatory meetings of boards, replacing with meetings at the request of the chair or a majority of members

Eliminate the Education Approval Board (EAB) and shift those duties to the profession licensing agency - the Department of Safety and Professional services (DSPS).

Creates an Occupational License Review Council that is required to recommend eliminating occupational licenses, and of those that remain, to have their continuing education requirements reduced or eliminated. This Review Council proposal is unamendable.

AMTA-WI Chapter joined in coalition with AMTA Wisconsin Chapter has joined in coalition with 7 other health professions in opposition of the Wisconsin Budget Bill provisions to eliminate/consolidate healthcare boards. The other associations are:

Wisconsin Optometric Association, Wisconsin Podiatric Medical Association, Wisconsin Academy of Physician's Assistants, Wisconsin Physical Therapy Association, Wisconsin Occupational Therapy Association, Wisconsin Society of Radiologic Technologists, and Wisconsin Athletic Trainers' Association. The white paper the coalition drafted was distributed to legislators and prominently referred to during agency briefings.

A copy of the whitepaper is available in the news area of our website <http://www.amtawi.org/news/>

In a budget briefing, the DSPS reported that because they are experienced in dealing with complaints, that they felt the transfer of EAB duties would not be an issue. The EAB deals not only with complaints against schools, but is also well-versed in the schools approval process and oversight including school visits to ensure compliance with regulations.

A recent study by the Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty (WILL) presented to the legislature looked at cosmetologists, veterinary technicians, private detectives, locksmiths, massage therapists and pest control workers. The study contends that intensive licensure requirements have a significant, negative effect on employment, and eliminating those regulations would result in a 7.06% increase in employment across all the professions under study.

However, other statistics paint a different story: According to the 2017 Massage Research Report, over the last decade, the number of massage therapists increased by 31%, with the majority of growth in the profession originating in licensed states. In fact, in direct opposition to their own conclusion, the WILL study included numbers from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, stating a massage therapy Job Outlook for 2014-2024 to be “22% (Much faster than average)”

Chapter GR has drafted a whitepaper and AMTA national office has also drafted written testimony, both to be presented at a Public Hearing on the budget with the Joint Finance Committee and distributed to all legislators.

To Chapter GR, with assistance from our School Liaison, is compiling a record of the CE available in Wisconsin by schools and local providers to demonstrate availability and affordability of trainings.

Future direction:

Continue to encourage members to contact their legislators in opposition to the budget bill provisions that weaken the massage industry and weaken consumer safety protections. Monitor through the budget bill signing this summer.

With assistance of our lobbyist, Monitor the legislature, including the 2017 Assembly Committee on Regulatory Licensing Reform and the proposed Occupational License Review Council for any proposed bills affecting massage/bodywork.

Prepare statistics, whitepapers/testimony to be proactively distributed to the proposed Occupational License Review Council in defense of strong massage/bodywork therapy regulation prior to any proposed changes to our profession.

Continue to gather strong community support for reintroduction of our proposed legislation in early 2018. Late summer/fall 2017 being process of drafting legislation, recruiting bill sponsors.

Chair, Lynn Marie Kutz has also begun process of certifying as a provider for health insurance plans. She has not been a preferred provider since relocating back to Wisconsin in 1999. Lynn will share her experiences navigating the current process with the chapter through articles in the Connecting Hands newsletter.