



Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

25188 Genesee Trail Road
Golden, CO 80401
800-458-2267
fax 800-667-8260
www.abmp.com

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Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care and Veterans Affairs,

Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (ABMP) is a professional membership association founded in 1987 to provide massage, bodywork, and somatic therapies practitioners with professional services, information, and public and regulatory advocacy. ABMP is devoted to promoting ethical practices, protecting the rights of practitioners, and educating the public regarding the benefits of massage and bodywork. Its current membership totals more than 68,000 with more than 1,900 members in Oregon.

Regrettably, ABMP wasn't afforded the opportunity to testify at yesterday's hearing of House Bill 2059 and was unaware of the amendment (HB 2059-A7) proposed by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB). In his testimony, Jackson Williams, the representative from NCBTMB, characterized ABMP as a for-profit insurance company that masterminded an elaborate scheme to create a new exam, an easier one than the national certification exam offered by NCBTMB, in order to "increase the number of licensees so they can regulate more people, collect more fees, sell more liability insurance policies." Unfortunately this is not the only statement made by Jackson Williams that was untrue. ABMP would like to correct or clarify the record on the following points:

1. Licensing and certification are two different things. A state license is required to practice in Oregon. Certification, in this case NCBTMB certification, is and always will be, a credential that is voluntary.
2. Oregon has never had a specific exam named in statute. We believe general language allowing the board to decide should remain.
3. The Massage and Bodywork Licensing Exam (MBLEx) currently recognized by the Oregon Board of Massage Therapy (OBMT) is endorsed by both leading national massage therapy associations, ABMP and the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA) as **the** preferred licensing exam for the profession.
4. Initial funding for the Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB) was provided in the form of a loan from ABMP. ABMP has no formal relationship with FSMTB other than as holder of the loan, which is currently being repaid; this is an almost identical relationship to what NCBTMB had with the American Massage Therapy Association when the NCBTMB was formed in the 1990s.
5. The MBLEx is currently accepted by Oregon and eighteen other states. Several additional states are currently in the process of adopting the MBLEx, some of which are awaiting legislative action to change statutory language; others are currently in the rules process.
6. The OBMT already accepts other exams, including the NCBTMB exams, for reciprocity applicants. The MBLEx was developed with reciprocity as a goal, however, it will take some time for its universal adoption as state boards navigate their state processes.
7. Despite claims by NCBTMB in testimony on May 12, 2009, meeting agendas and minutes were posted for the public and clearly identified that the OBMT was considering a rule change regarding the exam accepted. The NCBTMB had the same opportunity to stay informed as the rest of the public. This is precisely how ABMP followed the process from our national headquarters in Colorado.

Unfortunately the committee only heard the NCBTMB's perspective, which differs from most in the profession. The NCBTMB lobbied for more than ten years pursuing and persuading states to adopt the

NCBTMB exam as a de facto licensing exam and were successful in maintaining their monopoly and power over the profession. Now that monopoly is threatened with more and more states choosing the MBLEx, the exam that state boards have direct oversight of both in content and administration.

Massage therapy is an evolving profession and the formation of FSMTB and the MBLEx did not happen overnight. Years ago the massage regulatory and education communities approached the NCBTMB board with serious concerns about administration of the exam, incompetent customer service issues causing applicants delay in entering the profession, and the NCBTMB creating policies that did not comply with existing statutes in states. NCBTMB ignored the concerns and did nothing to improve their processes. The regulatory boards had no other choice than to form their own organization and develop their own examination.

The OBMT is not the first board whose authority has been challenged by the NCBTMB. The NCBTMB has now made it a habit to challenge regulatory boards' decisions and in every case the board has followed the proper procedures for changing the rule regarding exam acceptance; the only point that NCBTMB can make is that their organization will be negatively impacted financially.

ABMP would like to encourage the members of the committee to have a discussion with the OBMT before considering this amendment. There are obvious advantages for the board in accepting an exam they essentially own and have direct input to over a private organization's exam. The OBMT decision regarding entry-level requirements for licensing should be based on public protection; we believe that their intent was just that in choosing the MBLEx as a licensing exam.

Thank you for your consideration of ABMP's concerns. If you have any questions or want to further discuss our comments please contact me at jean@abmp.com or 800-458-2267 extension 645.

Sincerely,



Jean Robinson, Government Relations Director

