

ARIANA KELLY
Legislative District 16
Montgomery County

DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Health and Government
Operations Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Health Occupations
and Long Term Care

Insurance and Pharmaceuticals

House Chair, Joint Committee on
Children, Youth, and Families



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 425
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3642 · 301-858-3642
800-492-7122 Ext. 3642
Fax 410-841-3026 · 301-858-3026
Ariana.Kelly@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Delegate Ariana Kelly Statement

**HB 1039 - Health Occupations – State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners – Revisions
March 11, 2021**

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present HB 1039 which is an update to the Massage Therapy Practice Act. It modernizes the criminal background check process, standardizes higher education accreditation statewide, and gives the board authority to create an ‘inactive status,’ making it easier for massage therapists to return to practice after time away from the profession.

The bill makes two major changes to the statute:

First, it standardizes accreditation for massage therapists. The Commission on Massage Therapy Accreditation (COMTA) is nationally recognized as the organization that is qualified to create this specialized national standard for Massage Therapy education programs. Requiring COMTA Endorsed Curriculum at all Massage Schools in Maryland will bring a higher level of and more consistent standards to all the Massage Therapy training programs. Future massage students will be assured of a more consistent education that adequately prepares them for their new career, while the Maryland Board will know that their education meets their requirements for public safety. Most community colleges already use COMTA or similar guidelines for their curriculum standards to ensure students are prepared to pass licensing exams and enter practice.

Second, it modernizes the criminal background check process for massage therapists. Many Maryland health occupations boards use the Criminal Justice Information System Central Repository to receive information about changes in criminal history. This legislation adds the Maryland Board of Massage Therapy Examiners (MBMTE) to the system. Today, licensed massage therapists and registered massage practitioners update their licensure every two years. During the bi-annual update, they’re required to self-report criminal activity. Criminal activity

can also be reported by a third party. By adding the MBMTE to the Central Repository, the licensing board for the massage therapists will be notified more frequently than every two years, and as a result, will be able to investigate and take action more effectively. The health occupations boards for audiology, speech-language pathologists, nursing administrators, chiropractic, nursing, occupational therapists, physicians, professional counselors, and social workers have already made this change.

Approximately half of the massage therapists in practice in Maryland would be required to get new fingerprints to comply with the law but this change is supported by the American Massage Therapy Association, Maryland Chapter which advises that the burden of time and expense is reasonable in relation to the benefits of the new system for the State Board and their responsibility to protect the public.

The bill also makes several technical changes, including a variety of language updates to bring the massage therapy practice act in line with modern-day practices and education. It removes outdated terms (effleurage, petrissage, tapotement, laying of hands) and replaces them with clear language (stroking, kneading, tapping, hands on application). It replaces the CDC's guidelines on universal precautions with the correct and current CDC's guidelines on standard precautions and eliminates unnecessary language regarding insurance coverage.

The benefits of massage therapy are readily apparent to anyone who has had a good massage, and a growing body of scientific evidence proves its effectiveness for the treatment of anxiety, digestive disorders, sports injuries, and back pain. I urge a favorable report of this legislation.