

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1875

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to updating terminology in chapter 18.108 RCW.

Brief Description: Updating terminology in chapter 18.108 RCW.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Health Care (originally sponsored by Representatives Skinner, Carlson, Radcliff, Cody, Murray, Hatfield and O'Brien).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care: 3/4/97 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/11/97, 97-0.

Senate Amended.

House Concurred.

Passed Legislature.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Dyer, Chairman; Backlund, Vice Chairman; Skinner, Vice Chairman; Cody, Ranking Minority Member; Murray, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson; Conway; Parlette; Sherstad; Wood and Zellinsky.

Staff: John Welsh (786-7133).

Background: Massage involves the external manipulation or pressure of soft tissue for therapeutic purposes. Massage therapy includes massage and other specified massage techniques.

It is not clear whether massage includes the practice of somatic education. Somatic education practitioners employ non-intrusive touch to relax chronic muscular tension and increase physical and emotional awareness. It may include fitness training, movement to improve cognitive and physical abilities, and other body work affecting posture, alignment and body integrity. Some forms of somatic education are trademarked and include training through specialized education programs and completion of classroom hours as a prerequisite for obtaining trademark status.

The Department of Health (DOH) and state Board of Massage considered the question of whether persons engaged in the practice of somatic education are required to be licensed under the Massage Practice Act. An attorney general's opinion advised the department that somatic education does not constitute massage as defined by law.

The Legislature referred the question for study under the Sunrise Review Act to the Board of Health and the department. The Board of Health found that the practice of somatic education does not need to be regulated as there was no demonstrable evidence of public harm or potential harm occasioned by the practice. On the other hand, the department recommended that the profession be certified under its own title. Both the state Board of Massage and the department found, however, that somatic education did not constitute massage and recommended its exemption from the massage practice act.

Summary of Bill: Massage therapy involves massage for educational as well as therapeutic purposes. Specified massage techniques no longer include effleurage, petrissage, tapotement, vibration, or nerve strokes. In addition, genital manipulation is excluded. Massage includes the massage techniques of gliding, kneading, shaking, and facial or connective tissue stretching.

The practice of somatic education, as determined by the secretary of the Department of Health, is exempted from licensure under the massage practice act. The department must monitor the exemption of the practice of somatic education for any effects on the public health and safety, and report to the Legislature by December 1, 1999, with any findings and recommendations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: There is a need to clarify the practice of massage. Somatic education does not include massage techniques.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Steve Baruchowitz, Department of Health; and Melanie Stewart, American Massage Therapy Association (pro).