

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## SHB 1189

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Concerning exemptions from the massage therapy law.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Health Care & Wellness (originally sponsored by Representatives Short, Cody, Schmick and Kloba).

**House Committee on Health Care & Wellness**  
**Senate Committee on Health Care**

### **Background:**

A person may not practice or represent himself or herself as a massage therapist without being licensed by the Department of Health (Department). A massage therapist is an individual licensed to provide massage therapy, which is a health care service involving the external manipulation or pressure of soft tissue for therapeutic purposes. Massage therapy includes techniques such as tapping, compressions, friction, Swedish gymnastics or movements, gliding, kneading, shaking, and facial or connective tissue stretching.

A person who completes a somatic education training program approved by the Secretary of Health (Secretary) is exempt from licensure as a massage therapist. To be approved, the Secretary requires a somatic education program to be a professional organization with a permanent administrative location that oversees the practice of somatic education training. In addition, the program must have standards of practice, a training accreditation process, instructor and practitioner certification processes, and a code of ethics or code of professional conduct.

The Department completed a sunrise review of somatic education in 1996, recommending that somatic practitioners be subject to certification but exempt from licensure as massage therapists. The sunrise review used the following basic definition: "[S]omatic education addresses the person in relationship to movement, awareness, learning and the environment. Touch, verbal interaction, and movement are used to increase perception of existing and alternative postures and patterns of movement, and to improve functional abilities. This interactive approach may be used for education or therapeutic purposes."

### **Summary:**

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

For purposes of the exemption from the massage therapy law, "somatic education" means:

- using minimal touch, words, and directed movement to deepen awareness of existing patterns of movement and suggest new possibilities of movement; and
- using minimal touch over specific points of the body to facilitate balance in the nervous system.

"Somatic education" includes the practice of Ortho-Bionomy, the Feldenkrais method of somatic education, and any somatic education training program approved by the Secretary of Health as of the act's effective date.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

House	98	0
Senate	49	0

**Effective:** July 23, 2017