



North Star Integration

Discover Physical Enlightenment

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RE: Personal Testimony for SB 111 (2013)

Dear Senate Committee on Health Care and Human Services:

My name is Jon Grossart, Certified Rolfer™, OR LMT #13752, and owner of North Star Integration. I trained at the Rolf Institute of Structure Integration in Boulder, CO in 2006. In 2007, I was licensed in Oregon and have been in private practice since. I never attended a “traditional” massage school. I have been involved with the OBMT as a volunteer on the Multi-Discipline Task Force (2010-2011) and then the Scope of Practice Committee (2011 to present).

The crux of the matter surrounding SB 111 comes down to terminology. OBMT, by definition, oversees “massage therapy”. When massage therapy started, it was generally synonymous with Swedish massage and often used for relaxation. As the field and science matured, it became useful for therapeutic purposes as well. As time has progressed, many new modalities/professions (another terminology sticking point) have been created that act in a similar manner: extensive one-on-one time with the client using our hands to affect change in their body. However, “massage” has also had a long standing association with sexual connotations as well, which led many of these new fields to, rightfully, distance themselves from the term “massage”, as they functioned differently.

Unfortunately, many people still lump these various massage, bodywork, and somatic disciplines together. I term this the “big umbrella of massage therapy”, which would probably be better termed “manual therapy”. I term the “little umbrella of massage therapy” as the traditionally thought of term of “massage therapy” (deep tissue massage, spa type work, Swedish techniques, etc. – things learned in a traditional massage curriculum).

In the history of the OBMT – evidenced even by the name – it’s usually functioned as covering the “little umbrella”, even while by scope, it covers the “big umbrella”. This has led to a lot of groups feeling misrepresented by the Board and upset at being required to maintain a massage license.

However, in recent years, the OBMT has made great strides to work more closely with the various professions it oversees and to act more like a “big umbrella” organization, which has been greatly appreciated. Some groups were unhappy with the pace and decided to circumvent the process underway and seek exemption on their own which resulted in SB 454 (2011).

SB 111 is the culmination of the on-going effort over the last 3 years to allow the OBMT to be even more responsive the needs/desires of the groups it oversees. As such, one of the main points is to rename itself to the Oregon Board of Massage and Bodywork (OBMB) along with adding a definition of bodywork (which is in itself, very hard to define well). This does *not* change the scope of the OBMT as it has been functioning for years – it updates the language to reflect what the Board already covers.

From what I've heard, the group(s) opposing this bill have several objections. While valid concerns, they are not actually related to the bill.

Some will say that the bill seeks to give the OBMT purview over “bodywork” when it currently only has purview over “massage therapy”. As the OBMT functions today, regardless of the terminology, it oversees both bodywork and massage therapy modalities/professions. What this bill is doing is updating the language of the

law to reflect the modern realities of the field.

Others will say that this threatens the exemptions that were created under 2011's SB-454. This is not the case, as the bill does nothing to change the language of those exemptions.

The second part of the bill is about expanding the abilities of the OBMT to better reflect some issues specifically related to some of the covered professions as well as allow some provisions for public safety. Structural Integration (of which, Rolfing® Structural Integration is the original brand) is a practice that helps the body to become better aligned with gravity. The field as a whole does not consider itself to be a part of “massage”. This is the stance of both the Rolf Institute of Structural Integration (RISI) and the International Association of Structural Integrators (IASI). There has been a trend to seek appropriate licensure or exemption for the field.

The OBMT has been working with us over the years to make the process of becoming licensed for SI practitioners easier – from removing allowing the practical test to be in works other than Swedish massage, removing the hydrotherapy requirement, and most recently in accepting the Certification Exam for Structural Integration as the written exam for licensing. As a result of this collaboration and the desire of most of the Oregon Rolfers to remain licensed in some manner, SI pulled off of the 2011 exemption bill in order to work towards what will happen with SB 111.

This advanced certification portion will allow the OBMT to provide a separate license/endorsement (depending on how the rules end up being written) to specifically cover Structural Integration. SI practitioners attend programs where at least 500 hours are dedicated to learning SI specifically, with around 250 additional hours covering things like anatomy, physiology, ethics, etc. This is a type of work that cannot really be learned in a weekend type course. This endorsement will allow the public to know that if they are seeing an SI practitioner, that they are seeing someone who has been properly trained in the field, and not someone who took one continuing education course and thinks they understand it. This adds to the public safety as well as some title protection to the field of SI.

While SI is being used as the model test-case for this scenario, other professions may wish to add advanced endorsements for their field of work – mostly notable some of the Asian Bodywork practices.

One of the other goals was to allow endorsements for pathology/site specific work. This would be for areas of the body that represent either concerns for public safety directly by verifying that the practitioner has adequate training for that type of work. Ideas for this type of endorsement were breast massage, cavity massage, and perhaps things like cancer massage.

Altogether, SB 111 is looking to address some of the long-standing weaknesses of the OBMT and bringing its language and abilities up to the state of the art for the fields it oversees. I therefore recommend the committee to support this bill.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jon Grossart – North Star Integration
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