



EAST WEST COLLEGE
of the HEALING ARTS

A Professional School of Massage and Bodywork

May 6, 2015

Representative Mitch Greenlick, Chair
House Committee on Health Care
Oregon House of Representatives
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: SB 298A

Dear Representative Greenlick,

This letter is in support of Senate Bill 298A, which increases the number of class hours required for licensure as a massage therapist or bodyworker from 500 hours to 625 hours.

East West College of the Healing Arts is the oldest and largest massage therapy program in the State of Oregon. For more than 40 years, East West College has been committed to educating massage therapists to practice safely and effectively, whether they are providing general relaxation massage or therapeutic massage to assist clients with recovery from pain, injury or the effects of stress. We are dedicated to ensuring our graduates have the knowledge and skills they need to make a positive contribution to the health of their clients, and are gratified to hear from employers that they regularly choose to hire East West College graduates due to their competence and professionalism.

Massage therapy is increasingly recognized as a health care profession. In recent surveys of massage consumers by the American Massage Therapy Association, the use of massage for medical or health care reasons in 2014 rose to 54 percent, up from 43 percent in 2013. Eleven percent of massage consumers got a massage for injury recovery/rehabilitation in 2014, up from 7 percent in 2013. Sixteen percent of all Americans discussed massage therapy with their medical doctor or other health care provider according to surveys completed in 2013. As massage therapists are increasingly being called upon to work with clients with injuries, pain or disease, it's essential that they have the education to do so safely and effectively.

As the demands of the massage profession have changed, East West College has also been consistently revising our curriculum to ensure that our graduates are well prepared. We have relied on feedback from employers, graduates and the massage profession at large to adjust our curriculum topics and timing to meet the needs of the profession. For many years, we had a 600-hour massage therapy program which met the minimum requirements of our accrediting agency, the Commission on Massage Therapy Accreditation. Based on feedback from graduates and employers, we expanded to an 800-hour program, so that our graduates could be better prepared to work with clients facing a variety of issues and more confident in their knowledge and skills. The feedback we have received with this program length is that graduates are more able to assess the needs of their clients, identify appropriate techniques to address their clients' unique issues, and provide massage sessions which relieve pain, reduce stress, and speed recovery.

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Our 800-hour program is in line with the licensing requirements of many other states across the country: New York, Nebraska and Puerto Rico require 1000 hours for licensure; New Hampshire, North Dakota and Ohio require 750 hours; Arizona and Mississippi require 700. Even within the states that require fewer hours – 500 or 600 – many of the massage programs are significantly longer at 700 hours or more. In the most recent survey from the American Massage Therapy Association, massage schools required a median of 601-700 in-class, supervised hours, and an additional 81-100 clinical hours on top of that. In my discussions with school directors from across the country, there is a recognition that it isn't possible to prepare graduates to adequately meet the demands of working with clients who have injuries or illness in shorter programs.

We are grateful to have the State of Oregon recognize the need to increase the number of required hours for massage therapy training programs to 625 hours. In our estimation, this is the bare minimum needed to educate massage therapists to provide safe and effective massage to their clients. We believe that both the massage profession and consumers of massage would be better served by setting the minimum classroom hours required for licensure to 750 hours. This additional time would provide the opportunity for schools to ensure their students have adequate education and clinical experience prior to licensing so that they can meet the increased demand for massage therapists to act as health care professionals.

Sincerely,



Erika Baern
Director of Education

Cc: David Slawson, Owner and Director, East West College of the Healing Arts