

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: PCS for HB 197 Relating to Health Care Practitioners and Massage Therapy

SPONSOR(S): Healthcare Regulation Subcommittee

TIED BILLS: IDEN./SIM. BILLS:

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
Orig. Comm.: Healthcare Regulation Subcommittee		Osborne	McElroy

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

The Board of Massage Therapy (Board), within the Department of Health (DOH), regulates massage practice, including massage therapists and massage establishments. Massage practice is the manipulation of the soft tissues of the human body with the hand, foot, knee, arm, or elbow, whether or not such manipulation is aided by hydrotherapy, including colonic irrigation or thermal therapy, or any electrical or mechanical device, or the application of a chemical or herbal preparation to the human body.

DOH is required to annually inspect massage establishments for compliance with statutory requirements. Under current law, DOH is required to issue an emergency suspension of the license of a massage establishment or massage therapist if specified criteria are met.

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery involving the transporting, soliciting, recruiting, harboring, providing, enticing, maintaining, or obtaining another person for the purpose of exploiting that person. Illicit Massage Businesses (IMBs) are licensed or unlicensed massage establishments that purport to operate as legal businesses, but where sexual services are illegally bought and sold. IMBs are considered one of the primary venues for sex trafficking involving adults and comprised the largest group of citizen calls to the National Human Trafficking Hotline in 2019.

Florida has implemented several regulatory measures in statute in an effort to obstruct the operation of IMBs without interfering with legitimate massage establishments.

PCS for HB 197 significantly expands the circumstances under which DOH is required to issue emergency orders suspending the license of a massage therapist or of a massage establishment. The bill requires DOH to issue an emergency suspension of a massage therapist or establishment's license if any employee of a massage establishment is arrested for committing or attempting, soliciting, or conspiring to commit an offense listed in s. 465.074, F.S.

The bill expressly prohibits any sexual activity within a massage establishment. The bill prohibits advertisement by a massage therapist or establishment from being posted in any medium or website that advertises prostitution, escort, or other sexual services. The bill outlines further requirements for the operation of massage establishments and provides exemptions.

The bill expands the circumstances under which a massage establishment may be declared a public nuisance.

The bill will have a significant negative fiscal impact on DOH which is not currently addressed by an appropriation in the bill. The bill will have no fiscal impact on local governments.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2024.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Background

Massage Therapy

Massage practice is the manipulation of the soft tissues of the human body with the hand, foot, knee, arm, or elbow, whether or not such manipulation is aided by hydrotherapy, including colonic irrigation or thermal therapy, or any electrical or mechanical device, or the application of a chemical or herbal preparation to the human body.¹ Massage is therapeutic and a massage therapist must know anatomy and physiology and understand the relationship between the structure and function of the tissues being treated and the total function of the body.²

Chapter 480, F.S., entitled the “Massage Practice Act”, governs the practice of massage therapy in Florida. The Board of Massage Therapy (Board), within the Department of Health (DOH), regulates massage practice.³ The Board is responsible for establishing rules governing the licensure and practice of massage therapists and massage establishments. This includes approving massage therapy schools⁴, licensure exams⁵, establishing training requirements for massage therapy apprentices⁶, as well as setting minimum standards for and periodic inspections of massage establishments.⁷ DOH is responsible for providing investigative services to ensure compliance with regulations,⁸ while the Board has disciplinary authority over massage therapist and establishment licenses.⁹

Massage Therapist Licensure

A massage therapist is a person who administers massage for compensation.¹⁰ As of November 27, 2023, there are 36,178 actively licensed massage therapists in Florida.¹¹

To qualify for licensure as a massage therapist, an applicant must:¹²

- Be at least 18 years of age or have received a high school diploma or graduate equivalency diploma;
- Complete a course of study at a Board-approved massage school;
- Undergo background screening; and
- Pass an examination.¹³

A massage therapist is required to renew his or her license every two years and must complete 24 hours of continuing education for each renewal period.¹⁴

Massage Establishment Licensure

A massage establishment is the premises wherein a massage therapist practices massage therapy.¹⁵ A massage establishment must be licensed by the Board and adhere to rules set by the Board regarding

¹ S. 480.033(3), F.S.

² S. 480.032, F.S.

³ S. 480.035, F.S.

⁴ S. 480.033(3), F.S.

⁵ S. 480.041(1)(c), F.S.

⁶ S. 480.041(5), F.S.

⁷ Ss. 480.043(3) and (10), F.S.

⁸ S. 480.039, F.S.

⁹ S. 480.046, F.S.

¹⁰ S. 480.033(4), F.S.

¹¹ Department of Health, FLHealthSource.gov, Public Data Portal (search by Board/Council “Board of Massage Therapy”, then by Profession “massage therapist”, then by license status “practicing statuses only”), available at <https://mqa-internet.doh.state.fl.us/MQASearchServices/HealthCareProviders>, (last visited November 27, 2023).

¹² S. 480.041(1), F.S.

¹³ See rule 64B7-25.001, F.A.C. for Board approved examinations.

¹⁴ S. 480.0415, F.S., and rule 64B7-28.009, F.A.C.

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facilities, personnel, safety and sanitation requirements, financial responsibility, and insurance coverage.¹⁶ Massage establishments must be licensed in order to operate legally.¹⁷ There are approximately 8,966 massage establishments licensed in Florida.¹⁸

The Board requires the following be met for a license to be issued for a massage establishment:¹⁹

- Submit a completed application;²⁰
- Pass an inspection by DOH;²¹ and
- Submit proof of property damage and bodily injury liability insurance coverage.

The application includes background screening of the establishment owner and identification of the designated establishment manager (DEM).²² Under current law, a DEM must be a licensed massage therapist who holds a clear and active license without restriction. The DEM is responsible for the operation of a massage establishment, and must be designated the manager by the rules or practices at the establishment.²³

Massage establishment licenses may not be transferred from a licensee to another individual or entity.²⁴ Board approval is required for an establishment to move locations or change names.²⁵

Denial of Massage Establishment Licensure

A proposed massage establishment may be denied licensure for failing to meet the standards adopted by the Board, or if the owner or DEM has been convicted of or plead guilty or nolo contendere for a felony or misdemeanor relating to any of the following offenses:²⁶ prostitution,²⁷ kidnapping,²⁸ false imprisonment,²⁹ luring or enticing a child,³⁰ human trafficking or smuggling,³¹ sexual battery,³² female genital mutilation,³³ lewd or lascivious offenses in the presence of a minor, elderly, or disabled person,³⁴ or obscene or sexual acts involving a minor.³⁵

DOH may investigate the proposed massage establishment based on the application contents;³⁶ if DOH determines that the proposed establishment would fail to meet the standards adopted by the Board, DOH must deny the application for licensure and provide the denial in writing with a list of reasons for the denial. The establishment may correct the recorded deficiencies and reapply for licensure.³⁷

¹⁵ S. 480.033(7), F.S.

¹⁶ S. 480.043, F.S.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ Department of Health, Agency Bill Analysis for House Bill 197 (2024), p. 2. On file with the Healthcare Regulation Subcommittee.

¹⁹ Rule 64B7-26.002, F.A.C.

²⁰ See also, Board of Massage Therapy, *Application for Massage Establishment License*. Available at <https://floridasmassagetherapy.gov/applications/app-bus-original-mt.pdf> (last visited November 27, 2023).

²¹ The inspection must demonstrate that the proposed massage establishment is to be used for "massage" as defined in Section 480.033(3), F.S. and that the proposed massage establishment is in compliance with Chapters 456 and 480, F.S. and related rules. See rule 64B7-26.002, F.A.C.

²² *Supra*, note 20.

²³ S. 480.033(6), F.S.

²⁴ S. 480.043(9), F.S.

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ S. 480.043, F.S.

²⁷ Ch. 796, F.S.

²⁸ S. 787.01, F.S.

²⁹ S. 787.02, F.S.

³⁰ S. 787.025, F.S.

³¹ Ss. 787.06 and 787.07, F.S.

³² S. 794.011, F.S.

³³ S. 794.08, F.S.

³⁴ Ss. 800.004 and 825.1025(2)(b), F.S.

³⁵ S. 827.071 and Ch. 847 F.S.

³⁶ S. 480.043(5), F.S.

³⁷ S. 480.043(6), F.S.

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Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery involving the transporting, soliciting, recruiting, harboring, providing, enticing, maintaining, or obtaining another person for the purpose of exploiting that person.³⁸ Human trafficking can affect individuals of any age, gender, or nationality; however, some people are more vulnerable than others. Significant risk factors include recent migration or relocation, substance use, mental health concerns, and involvement in the child welfare system.³⁹

Victims of human trafficking are often subjected to force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of sexual exploitation or forced labor.⁴⁰ It is estimated that at any given time in 2021, there were approximately 27.6 million people engaging in forced labor.⁴¹ In 2021, the National Human Trafficking Hotline⁴² identified 16,710 trafficking victims in the US, of which 1,253 were in Florida;⁴³ however, these figures do not reflect the true scope and scale of the issue which cannot be easily quantified due to the underground nature of the issue. An analysis of data collected by the Hotline showed that approximately 6% of reported victims in 2021 were associated with illicit massage, health, and beauty services.⁴⁴

Illicit Massage Businesses

Illicit Massage Businesses (IMBs) are licensed or unlicensed massage establishments that purport to operate as legal businesses, but where sexual services are illegally bought and sold.⁴⁵ IMBs are considered one of the top venues for sex trafficking involving adults and comprised the largest group of citizen calls to the National Human Trafficking Hotline in 2019.⁴⁶ In 2018, a study estimated that there were approximately 9,000 IMBs operating in the US;⁴⁷ it is expected that his number has risen in the years since.⁴⁸ The Collier County Sheriff's Office estimates that there are currently 40 IMBs operating in Collier County.⁴⁹

IMBs are successful in part due to their ability to operate in plain sight. They are often located in strip malls and present themselves publicly as legitimate massage establishments. Markers of an IMB include: opaque or covered windows, locked front doors with a buzzer to enter, listed prices significantly lower than the market value, serves exclusively or primarily male clientele, employees appearing to live on site, and advertising on commercial sex websites.⁵⁰

³⁸ S. 787.06, F.S.

³⁹ National Human Trafficking Hotline. *Human Trafficking: What Human Trafficking is, and isn't*. Available at <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/human-trafficking> (last visited November 27, 2023).

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ International Labour Organization, *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage* (Sep. 2022). Available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_854733.pdf (last visited November 27, 2023).

⁴² The National Human Trafficking Hotline is a free service to connect victims and survivors of sex and labor trafficking with services and supports to find help and safety. The Hotline also receives tips about potential situations of sex and labor trafficking and facilitates reporting that information to the appropriate authorities. See also, National Human Trafficking Hotline, *About Us*. Available at <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/about-us> (last visited November 27, 2023).

⁴³ National Human Trafficking Hotline, *National Statistics* (2021). Available at <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/statistics> (last visited November 27, 2023).

⁴⁴ Polaris, *Analysis of 2021 Data from the National Human Trafficking Hotline*. Available at <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Polaris-Analysis-of-2021-Data-from-the-National-Human-Trafficking-Hotline.pdf> (last visited November 27, 2023).

⁴⁵ Chin, J. & Takahashi, L. (2022). *Sex for Sale: Illicit Massage Parlors*. 3rd Edition. Routledge. ISBN: 9781003228639

⁴⁶ de Vries, I. (2020). Crime, place, and networks in the age of the internet: The case of online -promoted illicit massage businesses. Northeastern University. Available at <https://repository.library.northeastern.edu/files/neu:m046sd37z/fulltext.pdf> (last visited November 27, 2023).

⁴⁷ Polaris, *Human Trafficking in Illicit Massage Businesses* (2018). Available at

<https://massagetherapy.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/massagetherapy.nv.gov/content/Resources/FullReportHumanTraffickinginIllicitMassageBusinesses.pdf> (last visited November 27, 2023).

⁴⁸ Det. Sgt. Wade Williams, Collier County Sheriff's Office, Illicit Massage Businesses Presentation. On file with the Healthcare Regulation Subcommittee.

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ *Supra*, note 47.

The majority of people trafficked through IMBs are women of Chinese or South Korean origin who have recently arrived in the US. They are typically 35-55 years of age, have no more than a high school level education, and speak little to no English.⁵¹

Law Enforcement Response to IMBs

Traditional police techniques for controlling crime have proven to be largely ineffective in reducing the presence of IMBs and their impact on victims of human trafficking. Traditional tactics such as sting operations, undercover work, and reactive investigations are still relied on heavily for addressing human trafficking and IMBs; however, these approaches have been shown to be ineffective in holding traffickers accountable and decreasing the risk of victimization.⁵²

Police response to human trafficking has been criticized for not being victim-oriented; few victims of human trafficking are identified by police as they often do not self-identify as victims, fear retribution from their exploiter, and mistrust the authorities.⁵³ Obtaining a conviction for human trafficking related crimes relies heavily on victim testimony which has proven difficult to obtain in IMB-related cases.⁵⁴ As a result very few police actions have resulted in prosecutions for human trafficking, thus signaling very little accountability for traffickers.⁵⁵

Under certain circumstances, IMBs may also be identified as a public nuisance and enjoined.⁵⁶ When such a nuisance exists, the Attorney General, state attorney, city attorney, county attorney, or any citizen of the county where the nuisance exists may bring a nuisance abatement action in the name of the state to enjoin the nuisance, the person maintaining it, and the owner or agent of the premises where the nuisance is located.⁵⁷ Such actions may result in a permanent injunction requiring the establishment to cease operation or abate any such nuisance.

Massage establishments may be declared a public nuisance under current law if they are operating outside of legal hours, serving as a person's principal domicile,⁵⁸ or are unable to provide the required identification and licensure documents upon the request of a law enforcement officer or DOH investigator.⁵⁹

Regulatory Response to IMBs

Florida has implemented several regulatory measures in an effort to obstruct the operation of IMBs without interfering with legitimate massage establishments. These regulations include:

- Massage establishments are not authorized to operate between 12am and 5am;⁶⁰
- Sexual misconduct⁶¹ is explicitly prohibited in massage establishments;⁶²
- Advertisements must include the license number of the individual massage therapist or establishment being advertised;⁶³
- Persons employed in a massage establishment must be able to produce government identification upon request by a DOH or law enforcement investigator;⁶⁴ and

⁵¹ *Supra*, note 47.

⁵² Vries, I. de, & Farrell, A. (2022). *Explaining the Use of Traditional Law Enforcement Responses to Human Trafficking Concerns in Illicit Massage Businesses*. Justice Quarterly, 1-26. doi:10.1080/07418825.2022.2051587

⁵³ Farrell, A., et al., (2019). *Failing victims? Challenges of the police response to human trafficking*. Criminology & Public Policy, 18: 649–673. Available at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1745-9133.12456> (last visited November 27, 2023).

⁵⁴ *Supra*, note 52.

⁵⁵ *Supra*, note 53.

⁵⁶ S. 823.05, F.S.

⁵⁷ S. 60.05, F.S.

⁵⁸ See, s. 480.0475, F.S.

⁵⁹ See, s. 480.0535, F.S.

⁶⁰ S. 480.0475, F.S.

⁶¹ Rule 64B7-26.010, F.A.C. specifies that the statutory prohibition of sexual misconduct extends to sexual activity occurring within any massage establishment.

⁶² S. 480.0485, F.S.

⁶³ S. 480.0465, F.S.

⁶⁴ S. 480.0535, F.S.

- Massage establishments are required to have a set procedure for reporting suspected human trafficking and conspicuously post a sign with the relevant procedures.⁶⁵

Discipline of Massage Therapists and Establishments

The Board has disciplinary authority over massage therapists and massage establishment licenses.⁶⁶ The purpose of imposing fines and penalties is to protect the public by assuring compliance with an agency's rules.⁶⁷ DOH is required to inspect licensed massage establishments on an annual or more frequent basis. Such inspections include, but are not limited to, assessing whether the establishment is in compliance with the requirements for facilities operation, personnel, safety, sanitary requirements, and existing insurance coverage.⁶⁸

Section 456.073, F.S., outlines the process for disciplinary proceedings for professionals licensed under DOH, including massage therapists. Disciplinary proceedings begin when a complaint is filed. DOH investigates complaints for legal sufficiency,⁶⁹ and if DOH determines a complaint to be legally sufficient all investigative findings are submitted to a panel to be assessed for probable cause.⁷⁰ Upon making a finding of probable cause, DOH is required to file a formal complaint, and may choose to prosecute the complaint pursuant to Chapter 120, F.S.⁷¹

The case may be referred to the Board for a hearing, or to the Division of Administrative Hearings to be heard before an administrative law judge if there are any disputed issues of material fact.⁷² A judge may submit a recommended order,⁷³ but the final determination of whether or not a licensee has violated the laws and rules regulating the profession is a conclusion to be determined by the Board.⁷⁴ The Board considers the findings of fact and conclusions of law contained in the formal complaint, reviews the investigative materials, and determines the appropriate penalty for the violation.

The Board has established disciplinary guidelines specifying the range of penalties based upon the severity and repetition of specific offenses.⁷⁵ The board is provided some discretion to deviate from disciplinary guidelines based on mitigating or aggravating circumstances.⁷⁶ Dependent upon the severity of the massage therapist's or establishment's infraction, the Board may impose any of the following pursuant to the Board's disciplinary guidelines: letter of concern, reprimand, fines, license with conditions, probation, suspension, revocation and/or fines.⁷⁷

During fiscal year 2022-23, 229 Administrative Complaints were filed related to massage therapists and massage establishments.⁷⁸ Of those complaints, 70 were related to sexual misconduct.⁷⁹

⁶⁵ S. 480.043, F.S.

⁶⁶ S. 480.046, F.S.

⁶⁷ S. 120.695, F.S.

⁶⁸ Rule 64B7-26.004, F.A.C.

⁶⁹ S. 456.073(1), F.S.; a complaint is legally sufficient if it contains ultimate facts that show that a violation of Ch. 456, F.S., of any of the practice acts relating to the professions regulated by the department, or of any rule adopted by the department or a regulatory board in the department has occurred.

⁷⁰ S. 456.073(4), F.S.

⁷¹ *Id.*

⁷² S. 456.073(5), F.S.

⁷³ See, s. 120.52, F.S.

⁷⁴ *Supra*, note 72

⁷⁵ See s. 456.079, F.S.

⁷⁶ *Id.*

⁷⁷ Rule 64B7-30, F.A.C

⁷⁸ Department of Health, Agency Bill Analysis for House Bill 197 (2024), p. 3. On file with the Healthcare Regulation Subcommittee.

⁷⁹ *Id.*

Emergency/Summary Suspensions

Under current law, DOH is authorized to issue an emergency suspension, restriction, or limitation of a license if the following criteria are met:⁸⁰

- The procedure provides at least the same procedural protection as is given by other statutes, the State Constitution, or the United States Constitution;
- The agency takes only that action necessary to protect the public interest under the emergency procedure; and
- The agency states in writing at the time of, or prior to, its specific action the specific facts and reasons for finding an *immediate danger to the public health, safety, or welfare* and its reasons for concluding that the procedure used is fair under the circumstances.

The State Surgeon General, or their designee, is required to conduct any proceedings for the purposes of a summary (emergency) suspension or restriction of a health care practitioner or facility license.⁸¹

DOH is required to immediately suspend the license of any health care practitioner who has plead guilty or nolo contendere to or has been convicted of the following offenses:

- Felony Medicare or Medicaid fraud under ch. 409, F.S.;
- Felony fraud under ch. 817, F.S.;
- Felony drug offenses under ch. 893, F.S., and equivalent charges under federal law;
- Misdemeanors or felonies under federal law relating to the Medicaid program;
- Felonies under s. 784.086, F.S., relating to reproductive battery; and
- Felonies under ch. 782, F.S., relating to homicide.

DOH also has the authority to immediately suspend the license of any health care practitioner who tests positive for any drug on any government or private-sector preemployment or employer-order confirmed drug test, provided that the health care practitioner does not have a lawful prescription for the drug.

Summary Suspension of Massage Therapist and Massage Establishment Licenses

DOH is required to suspend the license of a massage therapist or establishment when a therapist, or a person with any ownership interest in a massage establishment has pled guilty or nolo contendere to, or has been convicted of any offense related to prostitution or related acts under s. 796.07, F.S., or a felony under:⁸²

- Section 787.01, F.S., relating to kidnapping;
- Section 787.02, F.S., relating to false imprisonment;
- Section 787.025, F.S., relating to luring or enticing a child;
- Section 787.06, F.S., relating to human trafficking;
- Section 787.07, F.S., relating to human smuggling;
- Section 794.011, F.S., relating to sexual battery;
- Section 794.08, F.S., relating to female genital mutilation;
- Former section 796.03, F.S., relating to procuring a person under the age of 18 for prostitution;
- Former section 796.04, F.S., relating to forcing, compelling, or coercing another to become a prostitute;
- Section 796.05, F.S., relating to deriving support from the proceeds of prostitution;
- Section 796.07(4)(a)3, F.S., relating to a felony of the third degree for a third or subsequent violation of section 796.07, F.S., relating to prohibiting prostitution and related acts;

⁸⁰ S. 120.60(6), F.S.

⁸¹ S. 456.073(8), F.S.

⁸² S. 456.074(4), F.S.

- Section 800.04, F.S., relating to lewd or lascivious offenses committed upon or in the presence of persons less than 16 years of age;
- Section 825.1025(2)(b), F.S., relating to lewd or lascivious offenses committed upon or in the presence of an elderly or disabled person;
- Section 827.071, F.S., relating to sexual performance by a child;
- Section 847.0133, F.S., relating to the protection of minors;
- Section 847.0135, F.S., relating to computer pornography;
- Section 847.0138, F.S., relating to the transmission of material harmful to minors to a minor by electronic device or equipment; and
- Section 847.0145, F.S., relating to the selling or buying of minors.

Under current law, DOH cannot issue a summary suspension absent a conviction or the entry of a guilty or nolo contendere plea by the licensee.

Between January 1, 2020, and December 31, 2022:⁸³

- 13 massage establishment licenses were revoked related to sexual misconduct
- 23 massage establishment licenses were revoked for aiding and abetting unlicensed massage therapists

Massage establishments are also required to maintain a designated establishment manager (DEM) on file with DOH as a condition of their licensure. DOH is authorized to issue a summary suspension to an establishment who fails to identify a new DEM within 10 days of terminating the previous DEM.⁸⁴

Under current law, DOH is required to annually report to the Legislature the total number of administrative complaints and description of disciplinary actions taken against health care professionals and establishments licensed and regulated by DOH.⁸⁵ Such figures are required to be categorized by profession, but not by the cause for the complaint or disciplinary action, such as sexual misconduct or failure to maintain a DEM.

Effect of the Bill

Investigations and Enforcement

PCS for HB 197 significantly expands DOH's authority to issue emergency orders suspending the license of a massage therapist and massage establishment.

The bill requires DOH to issue an emergency order suspending the license of the offending massage therapist *and* the affiliated massage establishment upon qualifying circumstances. Under current law DOH has the discretion to suspend the license of the massage therapist *or* establishment dependent on the facts of a specific case.

The bill also expands the type of events which constitute cause for the emergency suspension of a license. The bill requires DOH to issue an emergency suspension upon the arrest of *any* massage establishment employee for committing or attempting, soliciting, or conspiring to commit an offense listed in s. 465.074, F.S. This expands the requirements of current law which require an emergency suspension only *after* a massage therapist or individuals involved in the management or ownership of the establishment has been convicted or found guilty of a qualifying offense.

⁸³ *Supra*, note 78.

⁸⁴ S. 480.043(12), F.S.

⁸⁵ S. 456.026, F.S. See also, Department of Health, Division of Medical Quality Assurance Annual Report and Long-Range Plan (2023). Available at <https://www.floridahealth.gov/licensing-and-regulation/reports-and-publications/MQAAnnualReport2022-2023.pdf> (last visited December 4, 2023).

The bill requires DOH to issue an emergency order suspending the license of any licensee upon a finding that probable cause exists to believe that the licensee has committed sexual misconduct⁸⁶ and that such violation constitutes an immediate danger to the public.

The bill requires DOH investigators to request valid government identification from all employees in the establishment at the time of inspection. If any employee of a massage establishment is unable to provide a valid form of government identification, the bill requires DOH to notify a federal immigration office of such.

The bill also expands DOH's reporting requirements regarding massage therapists and establishments. Under current law, the number of complaints, investigations, and disciplinary actions taken are required to be reported for all professions regulated by DOH, but the cause of action is not required to be reported. Under the bill, DOH must separately categorize complaints, investigations, and disciplinary actions against massage therapists and establishments by the specific statutory violations being alleged.

The bill expands the circumstances under which a massage establishment may be declared a public nuisance; under the bill, massage establishments violating regulations pertaining to sexual activity in a massage establishment and the maintenance of certain records may be declared a nuisance and abated or enjoined.

Requirements of Massage Therapists and Establishments

The bill expressly prohibits any sexual activity in a massage establishment, as opposed to specifically sexual *misconduct*, and prohibits the use of an establishment to arrange for sexual activity in another location. The bill broadly defines sexual activity to include any direct or indirect contact by any employee or person, or between any employees or persons, with the intent to abuse, humiliate, harass, degrade, or arouse, or gratify the sexual desire of, any employee or person, or which is likely to cause such abuse, humiliation, harassment, degradation, or arousal, or sexual gratification.

Under the bill, massage establishments are generally required to:

- Cover no more than 50 percent of any outside windows into the reception area;
- Ensure that outside windows into the reception area allow for at least 35 percent light penetration;
- Post signage outside of the establishment including the establishment's name, license number, and telephone number as provided to DOH;
- Maintain specified employee records in English or Spanish;
- Conspicuously display 2-inch by 2-inch photos of all employees with licensure information; and
- Maintain complete records of each service provided, with the full name, address, and telephone number of the patient for at least one year after the provision of the service.

The bill provides exemptions to certain requirements for massage establishments within public lodging establishments as defined in s. 509.013(4), F.S., and facilities wherein a health care practitioner licensed under chs. 457, 458, 459, or 460, F.S.⁸⁷ employs a massage therapist. The bill also permits health care practitioners licensed under these sections to serve as the designated establishment manager of a massage establishment.

The bill requires employees of a massage establishment are required to be fully clothed while in the establishment. Massage establishments within a public lodging establishment as defined in s.

⁸⁶ See s. 456.063(1), F.S. Sexual misconduct in the practice of a health care profession means violation of the professional relationship through which the health care practitioner uses such relationship to engage or attempt to engage the patient or client, or an immediate family member, guardian, or representative of the patient or client in, or to induce or attempt to induce such person to engage in, verbal or physical sexual activity outside the scope of the professional practice of such health care profession.

⁸⁷ Health care practitioners licensed under these sections include acupuncturists, allopathic physicians, osteopathic physicians, and chiropractic physicians.

509.013(4), F.S., and chartered with the American Association for Nude Recreation⁸⁸ as a clothing-optional establishment are exempt from this requirement.

The bill requires all advertisements for a massage therapist or establishment to include the physical address and telephone number of the establishment as provided to DOH. Massage establishments with more than five locations are exempt from this requirement. Massage therapists, establishments, and employees of massage establishments are prohibited from advertising in any medium or website that expressly or implicitly advertises prostitution, escort, or other sexual services. The bill deletes the statutory clause allowing new massage establishments with pending licensure to advertise using the license number of a massage therapist.

The bill changes quorum of Board of Massage Therapy from four members to a majority of members of the Board.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2024.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

- Section 1:** Amends s. 456.026, F.S., relating to annual report concerning finances, administrative complaints, disciplinary actions, and recommendations.
- Section 2:** Amends s. 456.074, F.S., relating to certain health care practitioners; immediate suspension of license.
- Section 3:** Amends s. 480.033, F.S., relating to definitions.
- Section 4:** Amends s. 480.035, F.S., relating to the Board of Massage Therapy.
- Section 5:** Amends s. 480.043, F.S., relating to massage establishments; requisites; licensure; inspection; human trafficking awareness training and policies.
- Section 6:** Amends s. 480.0465, F.S., relating to advertisement.
- Section 7:** Amends s. 480.0475, F.S., relating to massage establishments; prohibited practices.
- Section 8:** Amends s. 480.0535, F.S., relating to documents required while working in a massage establishment.
- Section 9:** Amends s. 823.05, F.S., relating to places and groups engaged in certain activities declared a nuisance; abatement and injunction.
- Section 10:** Provides an effective date of July 1, 2024.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

According to DOH, it will experience a significant increase in workload associated with additional complaints, investigations, and prosecution cases resulting from the provisions of the bill. DOH expects 8 additional full-time equivalent positions will be required to implement the bill.

DOH estimates the total annual cost to be \$1,034,032 in the following categories:⁸⁹

- Salary - \$846,102/Recurring
- Salary Rate – 593,954 Units of Rate
- Expense - \$71,000/Recurring + \$53,272/Non-Recurring
- Human Resources - \$2,878/Recurring

⁸⁸ See the American Association for Nude Recreation – Florida Region website for more information. Available at <https://aanr-florida.org/> (last visited November 28, 2023).

⁸⁹ Department of Health, Agency Bill Analysis for House Bill 197 (2024), p. 11. On file with the Healthcare Regulation Subcommittee.

- Contracted Services - \$5,100/Recurring \$55,680/Non-Recurring

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

Massage therapy establishments may experience a negative fiscal impact as a result of the requirements of the bill.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

Not applicable. The bill does not appear to affect county or municipal governments.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

The Board of Massage Therapy has the rulemaking authority necessary to adopt the rules pursuant to this bill.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES