



January 30, 2019

Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson

Chairwoman

Senate Health Committee

RE:**SB-124** "Massage/Soft Tissue Work in **Opposition**"

Dear Senator Monnes Anderson and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Chiropractic Association respectfully opposes this proposed legislation for the following reasons;

Chiropractic assistants certified by the State Board of Chiropractic Examiners who are both trained by and under the direct supervision of licensed chiropractic physicians, have performed massage therapy on chiropractic patients for many decades. This proposed legislation inappropriately attempts to disrupt this valuable service for consumers treating with chiropractic physicians. Massage therapy performed in-house by certified chiropractic assistants has been and continues to be a valuable adjunctive therapy for consumers presenting for chiropractic management of common conditions that cause back and spinal pain.

This proposed legislation would impose a hardship to certain classes of patients who have little discretionary income to pay typical fees charged by licensed massage therapists, up to \$51.90 per unit (15 mins), for example, Oregon Health Plan (OHP) patients total 1.1 million Oregonians or roughly one quarter of the state's population. Currently, OHP fees for massage therapy are fixed at half of the normal fees per unit of massage/soft tissue work. Additionally, few if any Oregon licensed massage therapists accept OHP patients specifically due to the low reimbursement. However, regional soft tissue work to specific injured and/or painful muscle groups by certified, trained, and supervised chiropractic assistants, is a valuable cost-effective adjunctive service for OHP patients. This legislation would arbitrarily and inappropriately restrict OHP patient's access to our limited in-house massage therapy by certified chiropractic assistants.

Further, it would not be cost effective for chiropractic physicians to hire licensed massage therapists to perform soft tissue work on OHP patients due to the low reimbursement levels, \$23.68 (1-unit). It is cost effective for chiropractic assistants to perform regional massage to injured or painful muscles as a valuable adjunctive therapy, for example, following spinal manipulation. Oregon Chiropractic physicians will continue to refer their patients to licensed massage therapists when the consumers

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Health insurance pays for that service, such as workers' compensation cases, or auto accident personal injury protection (PIP), that pays massage therapists \$51.90 per unit or \$207.60 for a one-hour massage (4-units) and \$311.40 for a 90-minute massage (6-units).

As per any concerns for patient safety, there are no concerns. Chiropractic physicians are first contact portal of entry physician types, the State Board of Chiropractic Examiners define doctors of chiropractic as "primary care physicians." As such, unlike licensed massage therapists, chiropractic physicians are trained and required to perform a thorough consultation/history taking, examination, to order appropriate imaging or lab work, to arrive at a working diagnosis and treatment plan all the while ruling out "red flags" that can represent dangerous disease masquerading as simple mechanical back pain. Only after a chiropractic physician has completed the above process with a new patient, does he or she allow their certified, trained and supervised chiropractic assistant to perform soft tissue work/massage when clinically indicated. Lastly, according to the State of Oregon Board of Chiropractic Examiners and Board of Massage Therapists, there has been not a single complaint filed with either board alleging injury by a chiropractic assistant while performing massage/soft tissue work.

This proposed legislation is not in the best interest of Oregon consumers, especially those with a lack of discretionary income. Consequently, we respectfully ask that you do not approve this legislative proposal.

Sincerely,



Vern A. Saboe, Jr., DC, FACO

Oregon Chiropractic Association