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CCMT to Support Process Regarding State Licensing for Massage Therapy

DENVER—April 8, 2008—Colorado is only one of 12 states in the United States that does not currently require massage therapists to be licensed in order to practice. In 1991, the Colorado Coalition of Massage Therapists (CCMT) was formed to work with government officials in drafting an equitable, enforceable, and inclusive regulation, which protects the name, the profession, and the public, with the ultimate goal of state licensure. The Colorado Chapter of the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA) is a member of CCMT.

On April 7, 2008, Senator Chris Romer (D-District 32) introduced Senate Bill 08-219, which would require massage therapists in the state of Colorado to obtain a license in order to practice massage therapy. The bill is co-sponsored by Senators Peter Groff, John Morse, Abel Tapia and Lois Tochtrop. House sponsors are Representatives Liane “Buffy” McFadyen (D-District 47) and Joe Rice (D-District 38), along with Terrance Carroll, Andrew Kerr, Larry Liston, Marsha Looper, Michael Merrifield, Karen Middleton, Jack Pommer, Dianne Primavera, Judy Solano and Debbie Stafford. If the bill passes and becomes law, the Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA) will be responsible for administering the licensing process.

Provisions in the bill require that every applicant for a massage therapy license shall have:

- Successfully completed a massage therapy training program consisting of a minimum of 500 hours of course and clinical work,
- Passed an entry-level competency exam,
- Submitted an application form, including fee and
- Passed a criminal background check.

“We commend Senator Romer and Representatives McFadyen and Rice for sponsoring this important legislation,” stated Kathryn Stewart, AMTA-CO Government Relations Co-Chair. “Legal recognition of massage therapy through licensure protects the public in many ways. It establishes a consistent standard of practice and will create a formal grievance process for consumers.”

For a period of one year following the enactment of the law, massage therapists in Colorado will have the ability to be “grandfathered” into the licensing process, providing they meet at least one of the following qualifications:

- Currently has a professional license from a political subdivision of the state (i.e., a municipality or county) that regulated the practice of massage therapy,

- Has been a member for at least one year, as a massage therapist, of a professional massage therapy association, or
- Has completed a massage therapy program of 500 hours from a school approved by the state education board or division charged with approving occupational schools in the state in which the program was attended.

SB08-219 was assigned to the Business, Labor and Technology committee for further review and action.

State licensing would mean one license and one set of rules and regulations to be followed and enforced. The goal is a reasonable law that protects the consumer from unsavory or unqualified individuals and is fair and inclusive to the profession. Currently, several local governments throughout the state have a variety of ordinances that can be confusing, complicated and expensive, especially if a massage therapist operates in several different cities.

More importantly, in the majority of municipalities, there is no regulation regarding the practice of massage therapy, thus allowing anyone to provide massage therapy services, whether they have been properly trained or not. Many of the proponents of regulation take great pride in their training, membership in professional associations, and the fact that they have taken nationally recognized competency examinations.

Thirty-eight states, plus the District of Columbia, currently have licensing procedures in place. Colorado joins Alaska, California, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and Wyoming in either introducing or drafting legislation at this time. Only Idaho and Vermont do not have licensing procedures in place and neither state is actively pursuing licensing.

For more information, contact Kathryn Stewart, AMTA-CO Government Relations Co-Chair at 303-425-7298 or vimarsha@aol.com.

For more information on CCMT, visit www.ccmbt.org.

About AMTA

The Colorado Chapter of the American Massage Therapy Association has more than 1,300 members throughout Colorado. The chapter is dedicated to furthering the professionalism of the massage therapy field and educating consumers on the benefits and use of massage in maintaining active and healthy lifestyles. For more information on the chapter, visit www.amtacolorado.org.

The American Massage Therapy Association is a non-profit, professional association with more than 56,000 members throughout the United States and in some 27 other countries. The Association is directed by volunteer leadership chosen through its national election and fosters ongoing, direct-member-involvement through its 51 chapters.

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