PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY

Exhibit No. 6

Date 4-6-09

Bill No. HB662

Hello Mr. chairman and members of the committee.
Thank you for listening to my testimony.

My name is Arin St. Cyr. I have been a massage therapist for 14 years in Bozeman and co-own a massage therapy clinic. I attended a 1000 hour program at the Desert Institute of the Healing Arts in Tucson, Arizona. I believe strongly in HB662 and I feel that it is time to license massage therapists.

Massage therapy is a unique profession. Over the last 30 years, this profession has changed significantly in the United States. For many of the last thirty years, many people who entered the field did not have access to any formal education. People who wanted to become massage therapists entered the field in numerous nontraditional ways. It has only been in the last 5 years that Montana has had an accredited massage school. I had to leave the state to attend massage therapy school 14 years ago because of that.

The profession of massage therapy now has national certification, educational standards, and licensure in 43 states. And yet the profession is still evolving in some ways. The process that HB662 has gone through over the past two months reflects the ongoing evolution of the profession. With the passage of HB662, Montana will be participating in this evolution. It is time now for Montana to regulate massage therapy and get underway with the process that follows the passage of any new practice act – working out the fine points so that the consumers will benefit and massage therapist will be held accountable to the public.

States do not have the ability to regulate a profession that is not formally recognized in statute. One of the many ways that professional licensure laws enhances public safety is by implementing grievance procedures and taking disciplinary actions against non-compliant practitioners.
Massage therapy has a significant impact on a person's health and well-being. The public has a right to expect that a massage therapist has the qualifications needed to practice effectively and safely. So, legal recognition of the practice of massage therapy and clearly-stated requirements to practice are essential to protect the health, safety and welfare of the general public.

By providing a legal definition of the scope of massage therapy practice, professional licensure helps consumers identify the responsibilities and services unique to a massage therapist. It allows consumers to select the most appropriate massage therapy professional for their needs and brings the benefit of open access to the selection process.

The standards that we present in this bill are similar to those in most licensed states. The bill also reflects a consensus process that has resulted in unity among Montana practitioners, many of whom joined this field many years ago when standards were not yet in place. This bill is the right bill at the right time. It does not make sense to leave the public unprotected and massage therapists unaccountable for another 2 years.
Please pass HB662.

Thank you for your time,
Arin St. Cyr