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Massage Therapy Legislation Signed into Law

AB 143 empowers municipalities and law enforcement to act quickly on human trafficking and prostitution

Madison, Wis. – This afternoon, Governor Tony Evers gave final approval on [2019 Assembly Bill 143](#), signing it into law in Madison. Introduced by Representative Joe Sanfelippo (R–New Berlin) and Senator Dale Kooyenga (R–Brookfield), the massage therapy bill passed through the Assembly and Senate earlier this year with unanimous bipartisan support.

Police in West Allis, New Berlin, Waukesha, and numerous other communities around Wisconsin have uncovered illegal activities taking place at massage parlors, with many serving as fronts for prostitution and human trafficking operations. Under prior law, law enforcement officers were limited in what they could do when they discovered massage therapy businesses operating without appropriate licenses. Until now, their only recourse was to initiate a complaint to the Department of Safety and Professional Services, which could take a considerable length of time to process. Police and local officials had asked for authority from the state to act more immediately upon discovering violations.

“Prostitution and human trafficking in massage parlors have been a growing problem in Wisconsin. Working with local law enforcement and city officials, we’ve authored legislation to give them the tools to take more immediate action to shut down these establishments once they discover illegal activity taking place,” said Sanfelippo.

Assembly Bill 143 authorizes municipalities to pass ordinances that empower law enforcement to issue citations immediately upon discovering unlicensed individuals performing massage therapy. This process will work in conjunction with, rather than in lieu of, any investigations by DSPS into any alleged violations.

“Massage therapy is an important practice that provides countless individuals with pain and stress relief each day. I know that there are many licensed therapists working in legitimate massage therapy practices across Wisconsin. This bill is meant to support them by allowing law enforcement to shut down bad actors that can undermine faith in the legitimacy of the massage therapy profession. That’s why our bill has received broad support from the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Massage Therapy Association, in addition to the backing of municipalities and law enforcement from around the state. I’m grateful to Governor Evers for signing the bill into law today. I want to thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their help in enacting this important legislation, particularly Sen. Kooyenga for his hard work in seeing this bill through on the Senate side, as well as my fellow West Allis colleagues, Rep. Rob Hutton and Rep. Robin Vining, for their support. I also appreciate the input we received from leadership and officials in the City of West Allis throughout the process,” Sanfelippo added.

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The [15th Assembly District](#) includes most of West Allis and the Northern half of New Berlin.