

Town Hall Meetings Were a Great Success as was the Canned Food Drive

Over 150 practitioners took part in the 2010-11 Town Hall Meetings held in Nov, Dec, and Feb in 20 locations all over the state. And Thank you to all who participated in our Canned Food Drive—we collected over 200 canned food items which were donated to local food shelves. For those who need it, a continuing education certificate of completion is available, (with approval through NCBTMB). Also if you attended a Town Hall Meeting back in 2008, we can retroactively issue a CE certificate for those sessions as well. If you would like a CE certificate, email us and we will send you a link to the quick online class feedback form (something we are required to do by the NCBTMB). Special Thanks to the AMTA-MN Chapter for partnering with us to get these sessions approved for CE Hours for those who need it.

Tweaks Made to the Bill for 2011-12

There were two main changes made to the bill language from the bill that made so much great progress in the 2009-10 Legislative session.

Those who attended the 2010 Town Hall Informational Meetings heard that there was a chance the title protected by our bill might need to change from “Registered Massage Therapist” to “Registered Massage and Bodywork Therapist” or RMBT. That has become the new language.

This was done for several reasons. It brings us more in line with the national trends for legislation, which will hopefully make reciprocity easier down the road. It makes the credential more consistent with the exams we will likely use to show competency for practitioners who enter the profession after the law goes into effect. And it will allow practitioners of modalities such as Asian Bodywork Therapy, whose core competencies for training are the same, to get into the regulation if they so choose, (because remember, this will be a voluntary credential.)

This change was made with the help of and after many meetings with the leaders of the ABT field in MN from CenterPoint Massage and Shiatsu Therapy School and Clinic, AOBTA-MN, AMTA-MN and the MN Board of Nursing. We appreciate their working with us and look forward to working together to pass this bill that will protect the clients of Massage Therapists and Asian Bodywork Therapists in MN.

The other change was in the language about the requirements for renewal. After many long discussions with legislators last year, we decided to delete the requirement for practitioners to do continuing education.

The lawmakers wanted it out because it turns out there is no research data showing that mandatory CE equals continuing competence. And while we fully encourage practitioners to seek out and complete continuing education to better help their clients, we cannot make it mandatory.

As soon as the session starts back up in 2012 and the bill is introduced, it will be posted on the state website and we will link to it on the ALMT website.

Looking for Ways to Help in the Credentialing Effort?

The strength of our effort starts and ends with our supporters. The ALMT is conducting a survey currently to update supporters' contact and legislative district information, availability to help in projects, and for those who really want to see this bill get passed and who are willing to put in some extra time to see that it happens, we are recruiting for leadership positions within the ALMT.

To help us know how much time people are able to give to help this bill become a reality, we are conducting a SurveyMonkey survey among registered supporters. Go to the ALMT website (www.almtmn.org) and fill out the survey so we have the most up to date info for you. Even if you don't have any time to give, making certain your other information is updated can be extremely valuable. The Survey will be open until 11:59pm Friday July 15th. Thanks for taking a minute to fill it out!

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Opposition Spotlight

Q: I will only support this bill if it is for a mandatory License. Why would we even go for a voluntary law?

A: Our website has a lot of information about why we are going for a voluntary 'Registration' credential, but briefly, it is important to understand, this is not our top choice either. The whole point of the credential is to protect our clients from those who would do them harm and and who at the same time, do harm to the name of our profession, making it harder on the rest of us who are doing the right thing. A mandatory License would certainly offer more protection than a voluntary Registration, but here is the key point: the MN Legislature will not pass a License law for our profession. We know this from having tried and failed time and time again. (There has been an effort in MN since 1989!) The legislature is willing to entertain the concept of a voluntary Registration for us however. So then the question becomes, is it better to put in place a law that will provide some protection, or continue beating our heads against the wall asking for a License. We think a voluntary Registration that allows potential clients, employers, and other health care professionals to know that a practitioner has been vetted by all the criteria standard to MN, along with an effective and efficient means of discipline for those who step out of bounds, is the better option. And it is certainly an improvement from our current situation. We hope you can join us in getting behind that.

Legislators Want to Hear From You

The 2011 half of the 2011-12 session is on it's summer break. And with the exception of a seemingly inevitable Special Session to finalize a state budget, the Legislature will not be back in session until January of 2012.

Over the interim and particularly in light of the state budget impasse, many legislators are holding "Listening Sessions" in their district so that they can get to know the stands their constituents would like them to adopt.

This is a great opportunity to talk with your lawmaker about how important our bill is to you, your MN-based business and your clients.

Go to your lawmaker's webpage by finding the MN Legislature in Google and type your home mailing address into the box at the bottom of the screen. There you can sign up for their email updates and find their assistant's contact info. Many lawmakers hold regular meetings in local coffee shops and libraries. Find out if yours does and go meet them. If you need ideas for what to share with them about our bill, let us know.

What Does the Bill Say

What is a 'Grandfathering' Clause?

A 'Grandfathering' Clause is typically part of all new credentialing laws. It sets up a pathway to the credential, in this case the Registration, for those who are currently in practice when the law takes effect, and for those practitioners who may have been in practice for a long time, and who entered the profession before the currently accepted level of education was currently accepted, or who never passed a credentialing exam because when they started in the profession, there might not have been an exam available to take.

This all sounds fine in theory, but the devil is, as they say, in the details, and how the clause is actually written can be very contentious. Typically, many vocal practitioners and professional organizations want the bar to be set as low as possible while legislators want the bar to be set as high as it can be. Writing language that represents a compromise in the middle of these two extremes is the trick and we over the past several years we have worked both with the profession and with lawmakers to come up with a Grandfathering Clause that does just that.

In our bill, to be Registered through Grandfathering, a practitioner would need to meet all the general criteria that are standard credentialing criteria for MN, (Current malpractice insurance, current CPR/First Aid, High School Diploma/GED or the equivalent, pass a relevant criminal history background check) and then have **just one** of the following:

- 2 years of documentable experience in the field
- 2 years as a member of a professional organization (like AMTA/ABMP)
- Completed an approved competency exam (like NCBTMB or MBLEx)
- 500 hours of documented education/training in the field

Once 'Grandfathered', the credential is renewed the same way, on the same schedule as everyone else's credential. There is no indication on the certificate of Registration that it was obtained through Grandfathering.

The entire bill will be available to read on the state's website as soon as it gets introduced in the legislature. In our next issue we will look at the all-important 'Grounds For Discipline' clause.