**Massage therapists are currently certified by the Board of Nursing. We are seeking a change in the Code of Virginia to license massage therapists and eliminate outdated language.**

**What is massage therapy?**

* Massage therapy is the scientific manipulation of the soft tissues of the body for the purpose of normalizing those tissues. It consists of manual techniques that include applying pressure, holding, and/or causing movement of or to the body.
* Massage therapy can reduce heart rate and blood pressure, increase circulation; increase lymph flow and the activity level of the body’s natural "killer cells;” relax muscles, improve the range of motion, increase serotonin and endorphins, reduce pain, anxiety, tension, and enhance medical treatment.

**Who are massage therapists?**

* Massage therapists are professionals educated and experienced in the treatment of soft tissues for therapeutic purposes by application of massage techniques based on the manipulation or application of pressure to the muscular structure or soft tissues of the human body.
* In order to be certified, massage therapists must complete 500 hours of study at an approved school and pass an examination.
* Virginia currently certifies 7,655 massage therapists under the Board of Nursing.
* Forty-four states, D.C., and U.S. territories regulate massage therapists. Forty states require licensure. Only Virginia and Indiana offer title protection only. All of Virginia’s contiguous states license massage therapists..

**Why is licensure the right type of regulation for massage therapists?**

* Massage therapists practice autonomously and in settings where they work one-on-one with their clients.
* Massage therapy practice has the potential to harm the public from negligence, incompetence, or unethical behavior.

**How will this bill solve the problem that exists in the current regulation of massage therapists?**

* The current system of certification permits massage therapists to practice without state regulation if they do not call themselves massage therapists.
* A licensure law will prohibit this by requiring that anyone practicing massage therapy must be licensed by the Commonwealth.

**What impact will the proposed legislation have on the regulation of massage therapists?**

* There will be no additional cost associated with licensure for those currently regulated by the Commonwealth. All massage therapists in good standing will be “grandfathered.”
* Those massage therapists who have not become state-regulated will have an additional year to obtain their license. The enactment date is 2017.
* All those applying for licensure will be required to undergo federal and state criminal background checks, consistent with those seeking RN and LPN licensure.