



Legislators, Mayors, Council Members and Law Enforcement Urge Legislature to Sunset Massage Therapy Regulation Legislation and Stop Proliferation of Illegitimate Massage Establishments

Mayors, council members, police chiefs and other law enforcement flooded the Capitol on Monday to call on the Legislature to replace SB 731 of 2008 with regulations that restore local control over massage therapy businesses to California cities and police departments.

2008 CALIFORNIA MASSAGE THERAPY LAW HAS LED TO HOUSES OF PROSTITUTION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING ON OUR MAIN STREETS

PROBLEM:

The 2008 State Law - SB 731 and subsequent State interpretations gave massage parlor businesses free reign that no other business has. It allowed massage parlors to open anywhere with no city review and no city ability to control numbers. It allowed the massage businesses to keep locked front and interior doors during business hours, to maintain closed draped storefronts, to allow customers to enter through rear doors at any time day or night and prevented cities from shutting down illicit businesses at given locations. Whether by intention or accident, this law has allowed the explosion of prostitution and human trafficking throughout our state. This law set up a non-profit board CAMTC (California Massage Therapy Council) to oversee licensing of therapist and schools with the supposed intent to create a more consistent method. This board, which is not a State run agency and is almost entirely made up of massage industry persons, unfortunately made their primary goal to license as many therapists as possible, with very little requirements. In addition, they actively worked against any local government efforts to control the prostitution and human trafficking problems created since this 2008 law went into effect.

STATISTICS:

Since 2009 when this law went into effect:

- CAMTC created by this law has issued 50,000 massage therapist certificates and revoked only 100, their board of 20 plus is almost entirely made up of the massage industry.
- South Pasadena went from 7 massage establishment to 19 with many of the new CAMTC businesses known to advertise illicit services, 3 with (Police verified) known prostitution occurring including one on right on Mission Street.
- San Gabriel went from 10 full body massage businesses to 54, 5 sting operations netted 4 prostitution arrests all had CAMTC certificates.
- Huntington Beach went from 16 to 75 massage establishments and an explosion in known prostitution and human trafficking
- Thousand Oaks saw a quadrupling of establishments with 47 on their main commercial corridor alone. They have documented that the proliferation of these establishments some with girls outside whistling to men to come in, have created serious blight on their main commercial corridor.
- Torrance went from 29 to 58 massage establishments again many with known prostitution.
- Cities up and down the State are experiencing the same. Unfortunately cities and their local enforcement are simply unable to monitor so many businesses that have sprung up and when they do find prostitution and try to shut down the businesses, a very costly and difficult process, these businesses are able to reopen with a new certificate holder due to this law.

LEGITIMATE MESSAGE BUSINESSES ARE HURT BY THIS LAW:

In fact the legitimate massage businesses are being hurt by the public perception that the majority of these businesses look like houses of prostitution, reflecting poorly on the legitimate businesses. Legitimate massage businesses will not be negatively impacted by changing this law and returning local land use to cities. They would be treated no differently than other uses and since all other types of uses are subject to local land use laws there is no reason massage businesses should be exempt.

ONE EXAMPLE OF A WHAT CITIES ARE EXPERIENCING:

One of the cities represented at the hearing was the City of Los Angeles. They gave just one example of how serious the problem is in their city. Kelly Muldorfer, a Los Angeles Police Captain in charge of the Vice Division that oversees human trafficking problems, reported about her experience. She said that CAMTC was an ineffective partner and in fact has hindered their investigations into known problem massage establishments. She said that there is no doubt that this law has masked the true nature of many of these businesses, which is the sale of sex for money. She said the public and communities no longer have confidence in these facilities. She explained that these illicit massage businesses have overrun our neighborhoods and bring down the quality of life for all. She said it is a fact that CAMTC certified therapists engage in human trafficking. She talked about in just one operation how they went to adult web sites and found 95 locations in one section of the city that advertised sex. Of the 95 they took 20 for a sampling and found 17 had CAMTC certificates. They visited these businesses and found that there was only females employees and all were inappropriately attired. They found advertisements offering specific illicit services and found beds and evidence that girls were permanently living (being kept) in these establishments. Other cities had similar stories.

PROPOSED NEW LAW AB1147 WILL CORRECT THESE PROBLEMS:

Some of the improvements proposed by the new Massage Therapy Act of 2014 (AB1147) include:

- Return Land Use Authority to Cities and Counties.
- Reconstitute the California Massage Therapy Council (CAMTC) to bring new leadership to CAMTC, the board will be reduced from 20 members to 11, with a majority being local government or new public member appointments.
- Allow Local Massage Ordinances so that local governments will be explicitly authorized to adopt ordinances that would require certificated massage professionals and registered massage establishments to comply with reasonable health and safety requirements, abide by hours of operation, and pay appropriate business license fees.
- Raise Professional Standards by mandating the passage of an examination, specifying the content of required coursework, requiring continuing education, and imposing a 500 hour education requirement for all therapists. CAMTC will also phase out the less rigorous massage practitioner certificate.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND WAYS YOU CAN HELP CORRECT THE MESSAGE PARLOR PROBLEM PLEASE GO TO OUR WEBSITE – www.WISPPA.org