



## Senate Bill 554

### *State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners - Massage Therapists - Authority to Regulate*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Health and Government Operations  
Committee

Date: March 26, 2019

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 554 as it expands the authority of counties to regulate massage establishments – an industry that has unfortunately become tangled in human trafficking and prostitution issues, which are difficult to address.

Currently there is limited and piecemeal ability to regulate massage establishments locally. A few counties – Anne Arundel, Charles, Howard, and Washington – have some authority to regulate the establishments, the therapists, or the licensing requirements under local laws. These counties do so with an eye toward addressing problem establishments that are allowing prostitution, human trafficking, or unlicensed massage services to occur. This limited authority makes for a piecemeal arrangement across the state with some counties having more tools in their toolbox to address bad actors within the massage industry than others do.

SB 554 would grant all counties the authority to regulate massage establishments on a local level and it would authorize the county health and police departments to enforce those local laws. Rather than make an abrupt and sweeping change to the current system, it requires counties to consult with the State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners before adopting any laws. This arrangement helps strengthen communication and coordination between the state entity that oversees massage therapists and the local governments that would be acting in the best interest of their communities.

SB 554 would allow counties to enact local laws to address unscrupulous massage establishments and therapists that create unsafe environments for patrons, employees, and the communities in which they operate. Accordingly, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 554.