

Patricia Thompson
State Director



June 5, 2014

The Honorable Ted Lieu, Chairman
Senate Business, Professions and Economic Development Committee
State Capitol, Room 2053
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 1147 (Bonilla) Support

Dear Chairman Lieu:

Your committee will consider AB 1147 (Bonilla) on June 23. This measure will create the "Massage Therapy Act" enabling consumers to identify legitimate massage businesses, reduce the incidence of illegitimate businesses that invite prostitution and trafficking, allow cities and counties in establishing local ordinances and establish an oversight council to ensure compliance. With 22,000 members in California, Concerned Women for America (CWA) of California asks your committee to support this bill.

Scores of news articles detail the proliferation of massage establishments across the nation as fronts for prostitution. Organizations involved in fighting the scourge of sex trafficking have identified illegitimate massage businesses as contributing to the exploitation of women who may be forced or coerced into participating as "massage" workers.

With the 2009 bill establishing the California Massage Therapy Council set to sunset in 2015, strong steps are now being taken to do a better job of balancing protecting the public and potential trafficking victims, allowing cities and counties to better control the types of establishments operating under local licenses, and ensuring that legitimate businesses are not overburdened with onerous regulations. AB 1147 appears to achieve that balance.

San Gabriel City Manager Steve Preston told the *Pasadena Star News*, "[The current law] didn't completely pre-empt local regulation but it so hamstrung it that a lot of the measures cities would normally use to control it have been taken away." The same article notes, "A number of local jurisdictions have seen the number of businesses jump exponentially since the law was passed; for example, the four-square-mile city of San Gabriel is now home to 50 massage businesses; Thousand Oaks has 47 and Huntington Beach has 74."

The League of California Cities has helped tailor AB 1147 to add more licensing restrictions, create greater accountability for business owners and establish a more rigorous process for obtaining a massage therapy license. In addition, the bill gives broader powers to locales to create their own ordinances to permit legitimate massage businesses while ensuring that those serving merely as fronts for prostitution, and likely sex trafficking, can be denied a license or closed if not in compliance. Once again, we ask for your "aye" vote on AB 1147.

Concerned Women for America is the nation's largest public policy women's organization with more than 500,000 members. If you have any questions regarding CWA or our concerns in this regard, please contact me at (760) 224-4744.

Sincerely,

Penny Harrington
Director of Legislation

cc: Committee members

CONCERNED WOMEN FOR AMERICA
OF CALIFORNIA