



SOROPTIMIST

Best for Women

Soroptimist International of Vista

P.O. Box 382

Vista, California 92085-0382

www.soroptimistvista.org

www.liveyourdream.org

June 3, 2014

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

Dear Senator Lieu and Committee Members,

We ask for your support of AB 1147, revising the current laws regarding massage therapy business regulation. According to the Polaris Project (www.polarisproject.org), one of our nation's largest anti-human trafficking organizations, it is estimated there are more than 5,000 fake massage businesses nationwide. Fake massage businesses use force, fraud, and/or coercion to maintain control over the women and to cause them to believe that they have no other choice but to provide commercial sex, often the defining features of a sex trafficking situation.

The current law regulating massage therapy businesses makes it difficult for city officials and law enforcement to monitor these businesses. Even if an employee at a massage business is found to be involved in illegal work, the business owner can go unpunished.

City officials all over California are concerned about the effect of our current law. In an article in the Pasadena Star News, dated March 8, 2014, San Gabriel City Manager Steve Preston said "There are a lot of concerns coming out of local communities, especially San Gabriel, about what has transpired because of the state law. It 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.' Several believe the law has encouraged illegal activities such as human trafficking and prostitution."

Kirstin Kolpitcke, Legislative Representative of the League of California Cities, stated in this same article that the new bill, AB 1147 will provide harsher restrictions in the state law for massage licensing, including holding business owners accountable for the actions of their employees. In addition, some say the process to get a license should be made more difficult and include requirements like forcing applicants to undergo a criminal background check.

"In the case of something like human trafficking, they can remove someone's license but the business continues to operate. Nobody is regulating the business itself or the owner," Kolpitcke said. "If I own a grocery store and a cashier sells alcohol to an underage person, not only would the cashier be in trouble but I would also be in trouble because I'm responsible for what goes on in the store."

The City of Oceanside has seen a steep rise in massage businesses, all of which are difficult for city officials to regulate. In the last two years, 14 massage businesses have opened in Oceanside with two others pending approval right now. In 2010, the city of Vista succeeded in shutting down eight massage parlors where officials believed therapists were involved in prostitution. Let's keep them closed.

We, Soroptimist International of Vista, (SIV) ask for further regulations of these businesses for the benefit and safety of our communities, and as prevention of force, fraud, and/or coercion of the women who work there. We urge you to vote in favor of AB 1147.

Sincerely,

Kaye Van Nevel
Member, Human Trafficking Task Force, SIV

Cc: Committee Members

Soroptimist International of Vista is a 501(c) (3) non-profit. EIN 95-6072211,
which contributes to local projects such as homeless shelters, Women's Opportunity Awards,
youth service awards and other projects to benefit local non-profits.

Your contribution is tax deductible to the extent permissible by law.



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