
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 1504
Author: Berman (D)
Amended: 7/16/25 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE BUS., PROF. & ECON. DEV. COMMITTEE: 7-0, 6/30/25
AYES: Ashby, Archuleta, Arreguín, Menjivar, Smallwood-Cuevas, Strickland, Umberg
NO VOTE RECORDED: Choi, Grayson, Niello, Weber Pierson

SENATE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE: 5-0, 7/15/25
AYES: Arreguín, Caballero, Gonzalez, Pérez, Wiener
NO VOTE RECORDED: Seyarto

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 5-0, 8/29/25
AYES: Caballero, Cabaldon, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab
NO VOTE RECORDED: Seyarto, Dahle

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 67-0, 5/19/25 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: California Massage Therapy Council

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill makes numerous technical changes, statutory improvements, and policy reforms in response to the issues raised during the recent sunset review oversight of California Massage Therapy Council (CAMTC), including extending CAMTC for four years until January 1, 2030.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the CAMTC to provide for the voluntary certification of massage therapists by CAMTC, a private nonprofit organization and sunsets the

CAMTC on January 1, 2026. (Business and Professions Code (BPC) §§ 4602, 4621)

- 2) Provides CAMTC with authority to approve massage schools and, if CAMTC has any reason to question whether or not an applicant received their required education from an approved school, requires the CAMTC to investigate the facts to determine that an applicant received the required education before issuing a certificate. (BPC § 4615)
- 3) Authorizes CAMTC to discipline a certificate holder by placing them on probation, suspending their certificate, revoking their certificate, or taking other action as CAMTC deems proper, in accordance with specified procedures. (BPC § 4610)
- 4) Pauses the requirement for an applicant for a massage therapy certificate to take and pass a national examination until January 1, 2027. (BPC § 4604(a)(3))

This bill:

- 1) Extends the operations of the CAMTC until January 1, 2030 and makes various changes to CAMTC board composition and operations. Permits the CAMTC to adopt policies or procedures that provide greater transparency to certificate holders and the public than what is required by the Bagley-Keene, and further requires the CAMTC board meetings to be governed by either Rosenberg's Rules of Order or Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised. Makes various changes intended to increase public awareness about CAMTC actions.
- 2) States that any applicant who meets all the other requirements for certification and who received instruction at an approved school that was not under formal investigation at the time at which the applicant began instruction but was subsequently placed under investigation by the CAMTC, must have the opportunity for an educational hearing no later than six months from the date the application was submitted or the student completed the instruction. Requires the CAMTC to issue a certificate to any applicant who successfully passes the interview or hearing, provided that the school at which the applicant completed the instruction was considered in good standing according to the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE) at the time the applicant passed the interview or hearing.

- 3) Requires beginning January 1, 2026, an approved massage school, upon each student's completion of curriculum, to provide notice to the student that a massage and bodywork competency assessment examination is not a requirement for certification but may be required for licensure or certification as a massage therapist in any other state.
- 4) Deletes the requirement that a female patient obtain a referral from a health care practitioner to receive a breast massage.
- 5) Deletes clothing specific prohibitions and maintains the CAMTC's authority to determine unprofessional conduct, as specified.
- 6) Specifies that denial of an initial certificate on the grounds that the applicant has been convicted of a crime or has been subject to formal discipline must be consistent with the requirements for the denial of a professional licensure.
- 7) Requires a person or body authorized by the CAMTC board of directors to participate in an oral hearing for a suspended certificate, as specified. Permits an applicant or certificate holder to appeal a final decision by the CAMTC to deny or revoke a certificate. Permits the CAMTC, for good cause, to continue the date of which an appeal may be heard, and in which case the appeal is to be heard at a later board of directors meeting. Requires the CAMTC to notify the applicant or certificate holder of its rights to appeal at the time of final decision. Requires the CAMTC to notify a school its right to appeal, at the time of a final decision.
- 8) Adds intent language stating the CAMTC is to be an entity entrusted with administering a state function in its certification and oversight of the massage therapy profession; and, that both state and state local regulation of massage therapy reflect the recognized status of certified massage professionals as health care providers.
- 9) Makes other technical and conforming changes and updates.

Background

The Massage Therapy Act is administered by a private nonprofit organization as specified in BPC § 4602. As a nonprofit public benefit organization, the CAMTC must abide by nonprofit corporation law, as specified in the Corporations Code.

The CAMTC is authorized by statute to take any reasonable actions necessary to carry out its responsibilities and duties, as specified in BPC § 4600 *et seq.*

The CAMTC is responsible for the voluntary certification and recertification of CMTs. The CAMTC does not register, approve, or have any other regulatory oversight over massage establishments. The CAMTC's oversight authority extends solely to an individual certificate holder. As specified in BPC § 4611, it is an unfair business practice for an individual 1) to use the title of "certified massage therapist" or "certified massage practitioner," or any other term, such as "licensed," "certified," "CMT," or "CMP," in any manner that implies or suggests that the individual is certified unless that individual currently holds an active and valid certificate issued by the CAMTC, or to falsely state or advertise or put out any sign or card or other device, or 2) to falsely represent to the public through any print or electronic media, that they are licensed, certified, or registered by a governmental agency as a massage therapist or massage practitioner.

The voluntary certification program was initially enacted by SB 731 (Oropeza, Chapter 384, Statutes of 2008.) Because certification is voluntary, non-certified individuals may provide massage services in accordance with local rules and regulations. SB 731 authorized the creation of a governing certification entity, the Massage Therapy Organization, which was, renamed the CAMTC by AB 619 (Halderman, Chapter 162, Statutes of 2011).

CAMTC-certified professionals are recognized throughout California to provide massage services but may still be subject to local ordinances and business regulations. Government Code § 51034 provides modest restrictions on local ordinances regarding certified massage professionals and massage businesses. For individuals not certified by the CAMTC, local jurisdictions may regulate those individuals according to their local ordinances. Since 2014, there have been an increased number of jurisdictions that require a CAMTC-certificate in order to practice massage therapy in that jurisdiction. The Act additionally authorizes the CAMTC to deny applications and discipline certificate holders by denying an applicant or revoking, suspending, or placing probationary conditions on an individual's certificate.

Comments

The committees have heard from numerous stakeholders including individual massage practitioners, professional massage associations, students who completed education at a school under CAMTC investigation, business owners and school

owners regarding the sunset review of CAMTC and the accompanying legislation. Some of the more contentious provisions include the sunset extension of the CAMTC by four years, the requirement to comply with the PRA, and the competency examination. Numerous massage professionals provided letters or emails requesting the CAMTC continue, as well as requested that a voluntary certification program continue, noting that the model represents a fiscally prudent option for massage professionals. Numerous other massage therapy professionals provided letters or emails requesting that the CAMTC be sunset this year, or in the near future, in favor of a state regulatory board and full licensure. Many note issues with the CAMTC's certification approval process and lack of transparency. A number of massage business owners and school owners wrote to express support for the sunset of the competency examination requirement for certification.

Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals supports this bill if it is amended to implement an entry exam requirement, move up the sunset of CAMTC to 2027, and set a deadline for transition to a statewide licensure model. The American Massage Therapy Association-California Chapter supports this bill if it is amended to sunset CAMTC and begin the process of creating a licensing structure

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations, although CAMTC oversees a voluntary certificate program, many localities treat the certificate as a de-facto license for purposes of practicing the profession. As a result, the value of the certificate as a license has resulted and may continue to result in civil suits against the CAMTC due to its approval and revocation actions. There may be unknown cost pressures to the state funded trial court system to adjudicate any civil cases filed as a result of CAMTC's continued operations. The fiscal impact to the courts will depend on many unknowns, including the number of cases filed and the factors unique to each case. An eight-hour court day costs approximately \$10,500 in staff in workload. If court days exceed 10, costs to the trial courts could reach hundreds of thousands of dollars. While the courts are not funded on a workload basis, an increase in workload could result in delayed court services and would put pressure on the General Fund to fund additional staff and resources and to increase the amount appropriated to backfill for trial court operations."

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/29/25)

Numerous Individuals

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/29/25)

California Massage School Association

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION: California Massage School Association writes in opposition: “We would like to express our opposition to AB 1504 and to the proposed four-year extension of the California Massage Therapy Council (CAMTC). The time to transition to a state licensing board is now. While all change presents challenges, the long-term benefits of establishing a state licensing board far outweigh any temporary difficulties associated with the transition.

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 67-0, 5/19/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Elhawary, Ellis, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Patel, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Bains, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Flora, Jeff Gonzalez, Muratsuchi, Papan, Patterson, Sanchez, Schiavo, Zbur

Prepared by: Elissa Silva / B., P. & E.D. / 916-651-4104
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