

Governor's Office of Management and Budget

Alexis Sturm
Director



Regulatory Sunset Act Study of

Massage Therapy Practice Act

May 8, 2026

**To the Honorable JB Pritzker
Governor of Illinois**

Governor Pritzker:

As required by Section 5 of the Regulatory Sunset Act (5 ILCS 80/1 et seq.), GOMB facilitated a study with the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR), the agency responsible for oversight of the Massage Therapy Practice Act (225 ILCS 57/) (the Act), which is scheduled to be repealed on January 1, 2027. This study provides justification for the recommendation to continue this Act.

GOMB's examination of this Act was conducted considering the factors set out in Sections 6 and 7 of the Regulatory Sunset Act. The following report outlines the work of GOMB's study and details the criteria and data utilized to arrive at the above recommendation.

Respectfully,

Alexis Sturm
Director
Governor's Office of Management and Budget

GOMB Regulatory Sunset Act Report: Massage Therapy Practice Act

The State of Illinois, acting through the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR or the Department), licenses the profession of massage therapy pursuant to the Massage Therapy Practice Act. The massage therapy profession enhances the general health and well-being of the mind and body of the recipient through a series of structured palpations or movements of the soft tissue of the body.

IDFPR's regulation of massage therapy protects and benefits the public by setting standards of qualifications, education, training, and experience for those who seek to practice massage therapy, to promote high standards of professional performance for those licensed to practice massage therapy in the State of Illinois.

Due to the hands-on, interpersonal, nature of the profession, harm could result if physical boundaries aren't respected. This could lead to a hostile workspace for practitioners and an uncomfortable service experience for clients. Absent regulation, there is a possibility for an increase in incidents of sexual misconduct and a downturn in industry confidence.

1. License Count and Fee Structure (5 ILCS 80/6(1) and (3))

As of July 31, 2025, IDFPR states that there are 9,583 active licenses for massage therapists in Illinois. See the following table for the number of licenses issued by IDFPR under this act in the fiscal years indicated:

License, Credential, Certification Type	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Licensed Massage Therapist	392	446	427	540	663
Massage CE Sponsor	4	1	2	3	4

Massage Therapists have the following licensure fee structure:

License, Credential, or Certification Type	Fee Amount	Online Payment Option
Application Fee	\$ 175	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Renewal Fee	\$ 87.50	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Duplicate Fee	\$ 20	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Examination Fee	\$ 265	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

2. Obtaining Certification as a Massage Therapist in Illinois (5 ILCS 80/6(11))

Applicants must be at least 18 years of age, meet a minimum requirement of 600 hours of training, and pass a competency examination approved by the Department. Each applicant for licensure as a massage

therapist submits fingerprint to the Illinois State Police for verification against the Illinois State Police and Federal Bureau of Investigation criminal history record databases.

The Act authorizes the Department to establish testing requirements by rule. Under the Administrative Code (68 Ill. Adm. Code 1284.20), applicants must pass either the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork (NCBTMB) examination or the Massage & Bodywork Licensing Examination (MBLEx) administered by the Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB).

Testing standards are set by third-party organizations. As stated in rules, Section 1284.30(a)(2) requires an applicant to complete an approved massage therapy program under Section 1284.20, or a substantially similar program in another jurisdiction, and pass either the NCBTMB exam or the MBLEx administered by the FSMTB.

3. Equity Concerns (5 ILCS 80/6(10), (12) and (13))

IDFPR states that the cost of the examination for licensure could impact individuals entering this regulated field. While grants and financial aid may be available, tuition and fees for an education that meets the Illinois standard can exceed \$14,000. The MBLEx is only offered in English and Spanish. Language can be a significant barrier to learning and licensure.

Additionally, the Department may take into consideration conviction of any crime under the laws of the United States or any state or territory thereof that is a felony or a misdemeanor or any crime that is directly related to the practice of the profession. Such a conviction shall not automatically bar the issuance of license, except in the case of any conviction for prostitution, rape, or sexual misconduct, or where the applicant is a registered sex offender. The Department shall revoke any license issued under this Act of any person who is convicted of prostitution, rape, sexual misconduct, or any crime that subjects the licensee to compliance with the requirements of the Sex Offender Registration Act. Any such conviction shall operate as a permanent bar in the State of Illinois to practice as a massage therapist.

Further study and coordination with industry groups and educational institutions is recommended to address barriers to the Massage Therapist profession.

4. Agency recommendations to change the statute (5 ILCS 80/6(4) and (9))

During the 2024 Spring legislative session, IDFPR recommended a statutory change to the Massage Therapy Practice Act to allow a licensee charged with a sexual assault crime to practice in the presence of a chaperone. The change was effective 8/2/24 as Public Act 103-0757.

IDFPR may make recommendations to better serve the regulated persons, entities, or the public as needed. Presently, there are no substantial recommendations by the Department.

5. Agency efforts to comply with enabling laws (5 ILCS 80/6(3), (4) and (5))

At the time of this study, GOMB is not aware of any compliance issues by IDFPR related to the provisions of the Act.

In the last year, IDFPR has begun implementing department wide changes to its licensing process by adopting an online licensing system in lieu of paper application to make the application review process

more efficient.

6. Recent bills introduced by the General Assembly (5 ILCS 80/6(9))

During the Spring 2024 legislative session, House Bill 5135 required applicants for certain health adjacent acts to provide proof of completion of IDFPR approved course in abnormal skin growth education, including training on identifying melanoma. The requirement became effective 8/9/24 as Public Act 103-0851.

7. Stakeholder Feedback and Protocols for Massage Therapist Licensure (5 ILCS 80/6(5), (6), (7), (8), (10) and 5 ILCS 80/7)

IDFPR solicits feedback from individuals regulated under the Act mainly through communication with practitioners, board members and lobbyists. These are often the individuals who maintain constant contact with practice professionals, are attuned to their concerns and are either directly impacted or responsible for relaying their concerns.

Regulated individuals are the driving force behind IDFPR's regulation of the massage industry in Illinois. Through the Department's focus on regulated practitioners, the public's interest is protected. IDFPR monitors the impact on industry interests when considering future regulatory practices, professional scope, and changes to educational standards.

8. Public Outreach (5 ILCS 80/6(5), (6), (7) and (8) and 5 ILCS 80/7)

IDFPR is always open to comments and suggestions from the public regarding the administration of the professions it is tasked to regulate. IDFPR provides several channels for the public feedback including a call center, social media platforms, and open lines of communication with professional liaisons and general counsel.

When changes to the current regulations are considered, the Department welcomes input from practitioners and stakeholders. That input allows the Department to keep regulatory practices current. IDFPR strives to optimize the collective insight of all interest groups for the benefit of the public.

9. Industry Standards (5 ILCS 80/6(11) and (12))

Not every state or U.S. territory maintains minimum standards for Massage Therapy. 48 states and U.S. territories require 500 or more hours of education to obtain a license/registration. Of the 48, 45 require passage of the national exam, Massage & Bodywork Licensing Examination (MBLEx). 42 states and U.S. territories require Continuing Education (CE) to renew a license.

Iowa requires 600 hours of training and passage of the MBLEx along with 16 hours of CE to renew on a 2-year cycle. Indiana requires 625 hours of training and passage of the MBLEx and 24 hours of CE to renew on a 4-year cycle. Missouri requires 625 hours of training and passage of the MBLEx and 12 hours of CE on a 2-year cycle.

No other midwestern or comparable states or jurisdictions mandate additional requirements for this regulated profession.

10. Public Complaint Resolution (5 ILCS 80/6(3), (7), (8) and (10) and 5 ILCS 80/7)

The Health-related Investigations Unit and Business Prosecutions Unit are involved in complaints for this profession. The following chart reports the number of complaints received from the public regarding this regulated profession in each of the last five fiscal years:

License, Credentials, or Certifications Type	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Licensed Massage Therapist	69	142	150	126	183

11. Disciplinary Action (5 ILCS 80/6(14))

The Massage Therapy Practice Act provides for disciplinary action against massage therapists if problems arise in their practice, during the provision of their services, or for other specified events. IDFPR has an established disciplinary process. Following the commencement of a disciplinary proceeding the Department may refuse to issue or renew, or may revoke, suspend, place on probation, reprimand, or take other disciplinary or non-disciplinary action the Department considers appropriate. Action may include the imposition of fines not to exceed \$10,000 for each violation, with regard to any license or licensee.

12. Conclusion

The Massage Therapy Practice Act governs the licensure of massage therapists and massage therapy continuing education in the State of Illinois. IDFPR's regulation of the massage therapy profession supports the public's interest by ensuring that practitioners are adequately trained, apprised of changes and practice related updates, while enforcing the observance of professional standards.

There has been no significant or discernible harm to the public or litigation resulting from the enforcement of this Act within the last five years. The State's authority under this Act protects the public's health, safety, and welfare by prioritizing public interest. The public has the expectation not to be harmed when seeking treatment for the enhancement of their health and well-being. Due to the State's proactive approach regarding enhancing quality of life statewide and its continuous implementation of forward-thinking initiatives, the likelihood of the public being harmed when seeking health related treatment is lessened substantially.

Based on the factors in 5 ILCS 80/6 and the additional criteria in 5 ILCS 80/7, GOMB finds that the Act should be recommended for continuation. The record should expressly state that the public protection benefits of regulation outweigh the regulatory costs and that no less restrictive alternative would adequately address the significant and discernible harms identified in this report.

The regulations under the Massage Therapy Practice Act should be continued to promote and enhance the safety and welfare of the public, without burdening licensees or commerce.