

# **Annual Report**

November 2022

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

#### Dear Members,

As you review the enclosed summary of events that have occurred over the past year, I wish to acknowledge the many volunteer hours that have contributed to the FSMTB accomplishments. The time, energy and commitment provided by dedicated volunteers is especially appreciated and valued. To all of our FSMTB volunteers and to those serving on and staffing the massage regulatory boards and agencies, what you do matters and it is important to know as you review this Annual Report, that what you do, makes a difference!



Craig Knowles **FSMTB President** Chair, Georgia Board of Massage Therapy

## MISSION STATEMENT

#### **ABOUT US**

The Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization comprised of 45 state boards and agencies that regulate the massage therapy profession.

Established in 2005, FSMTB's key purpose is to provide support to FSMTB Member Boards in fulfilling their responsibility of protecting the public, and to maintain the Massage & Bodywork Licensing Exam.

#### **OUR MISSION**

The mission of the Federation is to support its Member Boards in their work to ensure that the practice of massage therapy is provided to the public safely and competently. In carrying out this mission, the Federation shall:

- » Facilitate communication among member boards and provide a forum for the exchange of information and experience.
- » Provide education, services and guidance to member boards that helps them fulfill their statutory, professional, public and ethical obligations.
- » Support efforts among member boards to establish compatible requirements and cooperative procedures for the legal regulation of massage therapists in order to facilitate professional mobility and to simplify and standardize the licensing process.

- » Ensure the provision of a valid, reliable licensing examination to determine entry-level competence.
- Improve the standards of massage therapy education, licensure, and practice through cooperation with entities that share this objective, including other massage therapy organizations, accrediting agencies, governmental bodies and groups whose areas of interest may coincide with those of member boards.
- » Represent the interests of its member boards in matters consistent with the scope of the Bylaws.



## STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2023

Enhance communications to facilitate understanding of the regulatory community roles and the value of FSMTB products and services.

#### **GOAL 1**

Implement communication strategy for stakeholders to create awareness of importance of the MBLEx for security, portability, and licensure integrity.

- Outreach to schools and students regarding MBLEx and Regulation
- Educated states about MBLEx and content to affirm purpose and utilization
- Provided education and training about fraud in the MT profession to state board staff, law enforcement, and state authorizers.

#### GOAL 2

Promote utilization of CE **Registry for benefit of LMTs** and providers.

- Promoted the CE Registry program and its benefits to LMTs
- Enlisted a marketing agency to increase CE Registry's online visibility and web presence.
- Promoted CE Registry to stakeholders through targeted marketing efforts.

#### GOAL 3

Partner with states to educate and support their students and emerging professionals.

Government Relations focused on membership outreach. including providing policy support and presentations to a number of boards regarding:

- MTLD
- CE Registry
- » REACH
- MBLEx
- > Hybrid Massage Therapy Education



# **FSMTB AT A GLANCE**



46 States and Territories use the MBLEx

>20K

20K Candidates take the MBLEx Annually

5440

Massage Therapists Responded to the Job Task Analysis

**x2** 

Participation in CE Registry Doubled Over Previous Year

**7**81%

81% REACH Course Participation Increase Over Previous Year

**†**55%

55% More REACH Courses Offered Compared to Previous Year



45 State Regulatory **Board Members** 



100+

100+ Board Meetings Attended

70+

70+ Legislative and **Committee Hearings** Attended

150+ Bills Tracked



**©** 6K+

6000+ Monthly Calls and Emails **Answered** 



160k Website Visitors Annually



7k+ Combined Social Media **Followers** 







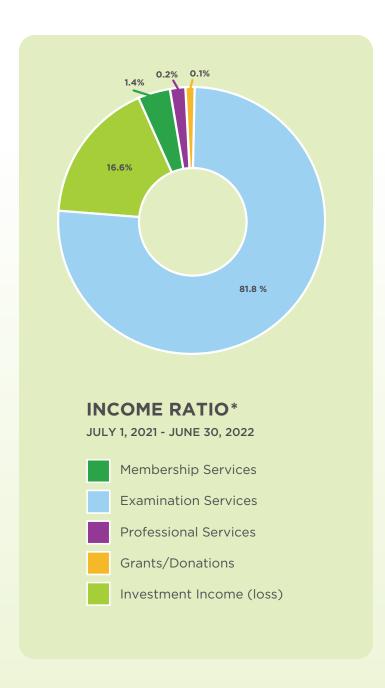
#### Thank you to the members of the **Finance Committee.**

We appreciate your service and skills to help the Federation with fiscal accountability to our members.

## **FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT** 2021-2022

TOTAL ASSETS (cash and investments)	\$16,762,420
TOTAL INCOME	\$4,391,075
EXPENSES	\$3,988,587
BUDGET (loss/negative)	(\$798,512)
NET INCOME	\$402,488
BUDGET SURPLUS	\$1,201,000



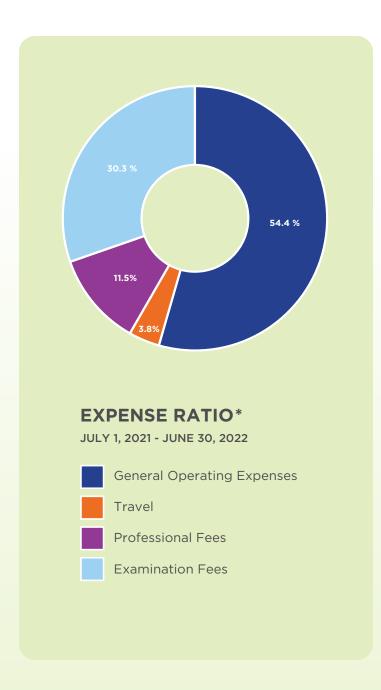


# **INCOME**

Membership Services	\$89,440
Examination Services	\$5,378,980
Professional Services	\$11,035
Grants/Donations	\$5,100
Investment Income (loss)	\$1,093,075
TOTAL INCOME	\$4,391,075

\*Approximate/Unaudited





# **EXPENSES**

General Operating Expenses	\$2,170,340
Travel	\$151,213
Professional Fees	\$457,534
Examination Fees	\$1,209,500
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$3,988,587

\*Approximate/Unaudited



#### **INVESTMENTS**

Financial reserves are needed, not only for organizational health but also to protect the integrity of the licensing exam and the licensure process.

At the beginning of the fiscal year, we had \$11.6 million and as of the end of our fiscal year we were sitting at \$12.3 million in reserves.





#### **AUDIT**

Auditors reviewed the financial status of the organization and assessed the following essential elements:

- » Examination of amounts and disclosures in financial statements
- » Evaluation of appropriateness of accounting policies
- » Reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management
- » Evaluation of overall presentation of the financial statements



# **Member Services**

MBLEx • Job Task Analysis • Membership Events • Government Relations Interstate Massage Compact • MTLD Continuing Education • Industry Relations



#### **MASSAGE & BODYWORK LICENSING EXAMINATION (MBLEX)**

The Massage & Bodywork Licensing Examination, more commonly known by its acronym as the MBLEx, is our flagship program. This entry level licensing exam quickly became an integral part of the licensure process. Providing a valid and psychometrically sound exam to measure the competence of emerging professionals has been made possible by many hours of item writing, reviews, and security measures. The MBLEx is a vital tool for our member boards, as well as a respected product in the testing community. Collaboration between FSMTB, member boards, and law enforcement agencies provide a network of resources to protect both the exam and the integrity of the licensure process.

#### **MBLEX QUESTION FORMAT CHANGE**

In 2022, MBLEx candidates began to see some three-option multiple choice questions in addition to the four-option multiple choice questions on their exam. Based on performance and candidate feedback, the number of threeoption questions on the exam may increase in the future.

The FSMTB, and our psychometric team who monitor current standardized testing performance, continue to explore ways to support our candidates in demonstrating their ability to practice safely and competently.



# **JOB TASK ANALYSIS**

#### **2022 JOB TASK ANALYSIS**

Best practices in testing and assessments relative to licensing exam development is to survey the profession every five to seven years for a snapshot of current practice.

FSMTB issued a Job Task Analysis (JTA) Survey to massage professionals and stakeholders across the United States in June of 2022. The survey results inform the licensing exam development to ensure that the Massage & Bodywork Licensing Examination (MBLEx) assesses knowledge, comprehension, and application discernment relevant to entrylevel competence and public protection.

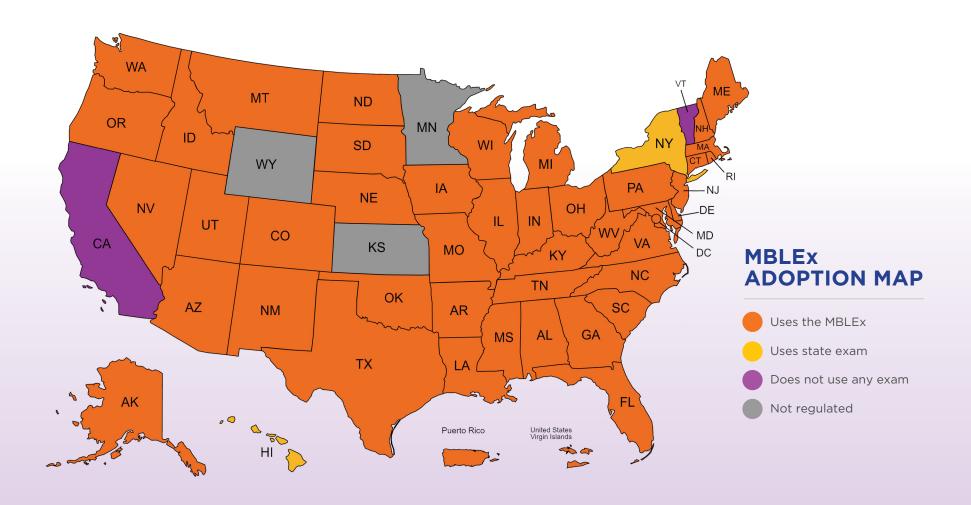
The data from the JTA is used to analyze, advise and revise MBLEx content as necessary based on the profession's input, with the guidance of psychometric professionals.

In addition to the JTA, FSMTB included an optional survey for massage professionals to provide FSMTB with data on their experience(s) with sexual harassment by clients.

The 2022 JTA Survey received input from 5,440 respondents.



# **MBLEX**®







#### **MBLEx PERFORMANCE DATA**

Considering the continued influence of COVID-19 and COVID variant spread, exam performance data continues to experience ebbs and flows.

Exam pass rates have steadily been climbing. In November 2021 we saw a pass rate low of 59% which incrementally increased to a high of 73% in May and June 2022 consecutively.

13,278 candidates took the MBLEx for the first time between July 2021-June 2022.

#### **MBLEX TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS**

The FSMTB complies with federal laws regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act and considers requests from qualified candidates with a diagnosed disability for accommodations to take the MBLEx if the request is reasonable, properly documented, and does not fundamentally alter the examination or jeopardize exam security. The costs for providing the testing accommodations are covered entirely by FSMTB.

This year, FSMTB supported 293 candidates with testing accommodations and provided 596 qualifying testing accommodations, reflective of candidate need. The nature of the disabilities for which the accommodations were provided included ADHD, learning disabilities, dyslexia, visual/hearing impairments, and mental health conditions.





#### **MBLEX CANDIDATE HANDBOOK**

The most current edition of the Massage & **Bodywork Licensing Examination Candidate** Handbook, published on July 1, 2022, is available electronically at fsmtb.org.

The MBLEx Candidate Handbook is an important resource for applicants and schools. It provides information about eligibility requirements, application procedures, fees, examination scheduling, FSMTB candidate support, and study resources. Further, it includes all policies regarding examination administration, irregularities, and examination confidentiality.



Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards

fsmtb.org • Effective July 2022





#### STUDY RESOURCES FOR CANDIDATES APPLYING TO TAKE THE MBLEX

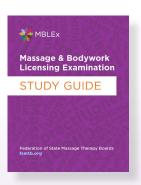
FSMTB is dedicated to providing quality study resources to support MBLEx candidates in their exam preparation.



#### THE MBLEX CHECK ONLINE **READINESS ASSESSMENT**

is the official practice examination designed to simulate the MBLEx experience, which allows candidates an opportunity to prepare for the exam and determine which areas of content need their additional focus.

The MBI Ex Check is also available in Spanish for our colleagues in Puerto Rico and other parts of the country, for members of the Spanishspeaking massage community.



THE MBLEX STUDY GUIDE is the only study guide created by the experts who provide the MBLEx. This guide includes a breakdown of the examination content areas and tips for a successful examination experience. Additionally, the Official MBLEx Study Guide includes a 100-question practice exam and sample exam items throughout the book.



A digital version of the study guide, the Official MBLEx e-Study Guide, was published in 2022 and is available for purchase on the fsmtb.org website for instant access.



#### **FSMTB SCHOOL SUPPORT**

The FSMTB School Support team serves as a resource for approved massage therapy training programs in support of their students. The School Support team assists with Education Verification Center user accounts, processing transcripts for closed schools, and the generation of school examination performance reports

#### **EDUCATION VERIFICATION CENTER (EVC)**

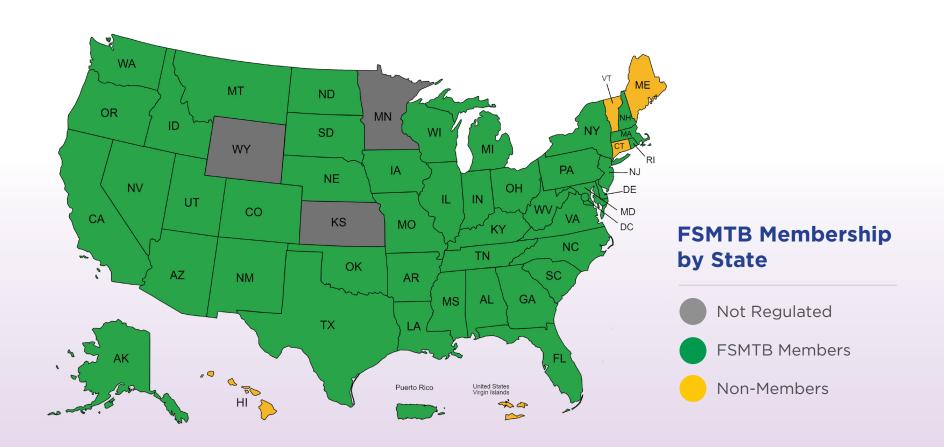
FSMTB streamlined the education verification process for state-approved massage therapy training programs. The technology provides a simple and efficient process for schools to verify a student's training and education.

Over 950 state-approved massage therapy training programs are registered with the EVC.





# **FSMTB MEMBERSHIP**



# MEMBERSHIP EVENTS



#### MASSAGE BOARD EXECUTIVE SUMMIT

The Massage Board Executive (MBE) Summit was held in Clearwater, Florida on May 5-6, 2022. Topics addressed included Interagency Collaboration, Massage Therapy Education, the development of the Massage Therapy Licensing Compact, and the Massage Therapy Licensing Database. This was the first major meeting hosted by the FSMTB in-person since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The post-event survey results were extremely positive and feedback reported by the attendees to their boards was that the Summit was highly valuable.

#### VIRTUAL MEMBERSHIP EVENTS

The FSMTB hosted monthly Virtual Membership Events

**(VME).** The purpose of the VMEs is to educate board/agency members and staff on regulatory trends and emerging issues, FSMTB program initiatives, and to provide foundational information on topics of interest to massage therapy

regulators. Topics addressed included the Massage Therapy Licensing Database (MTLD), Interstate Massage Compact (IMpact), the Massage & Bodywork Licensing Examination (MBLEx), fraud and exam security, and regulatory board operations.

The overall feedback from the events has been positive. Our members find the events to be both informative and engaging, with many opportunities for members to share their experiences and opinions on a range of topics. Attendees reported favorably about the virtual membership events in their state board meetings.



# **GOVERNMENT RELATIONS**

The FSMTB serves all forty-five member states and territories and places a premium on serving its members to the highest degree possible.

The primary role of the government relations team is to assist member boards via legislative tracking of pertinent changes to the massage therapy field, writing letters and providing testimony to parties in the lawmaking process, affirming and providing guidance set forth in the Model Massage Therapy Practice Act, and responding to board inquiries.

#### **OUTREACH: BOARD MEETINGS AND** LEGISLATIVE HEARINGS ATTENDED

In support of the strategic plan, the government relations team concentrated on membership outreach. Policy support and presentations were provided to a number of boards regarding the Massage Therapy Licensing Database (MTLD), Continuing Education (CE) Registry, the Regulatory Education and Competence Hub (REACH), hybrid massage therapy education, and the Massage & Bodywork Licensing Examination (MBLEx).

The FSMTB staff attended over 70 legislative and committee hearings and submitted correspondence or provided testimony on 14 occasions to 7 different state legislatures.

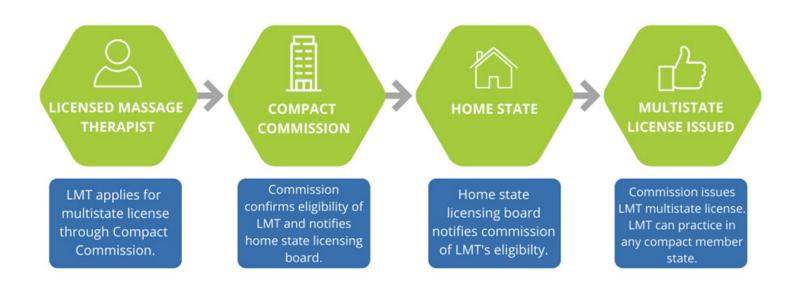
#### LEGISLATIVE TRACKING

The government relations team tracks legislation related to massage therapy to educate and inform our member boards to promote uniform licensure standards.

A total of 150 bills were tracked by the government relations team. The most common types of legislation were bills relating to massage boards (e.g., sunset/ sunrise reviews and changes, changes in case hearing procedures, changes in board size and staffing requirements, addition of an advisory committee or individual), human trafficking, and licensing requirements. Other types of bills proposed and passed addressed background checks, education requirements, and continuing education requirements for licensees.



# **IMpact**



#### INTERSTATE MASSAGE COMPACT (IMpact)

Since May of 2021, massage therapy regulators, practitioners, and educators, in collaboration with FSMTB and the Council of State Governments (CSG), have been developing a massage therapy interstate licensure compact. IMpact will enable licensed massage therapists to practice in all states that join the compact, rather than get an individual license in each state where they want to practice.

The initial draft of the Interstate Massage Compact underwent stakeholder review and public comment during the summer of 2022. Revisions pursuant to that stakeholder feedback will be made with the goal for the legislation to be introduced during each state's 2023 legislative session.

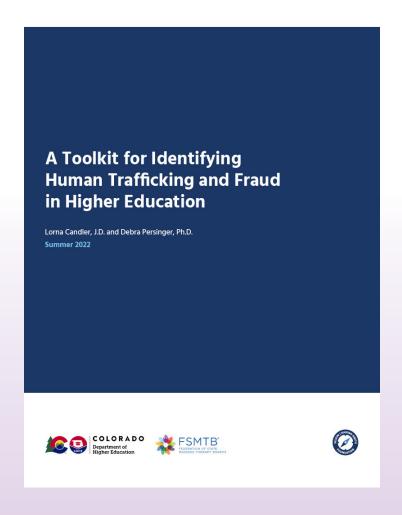
Once IMpact is activated, the Compact Commission will begin accepting applications for the massage therapy multistate license. A key component of IMpact is FSMTB's Massage Therapy Licensing Database (MTLD).

# **HUMAN TRAFFICKING TOOLKIT**

#### **HUMAN TRAFFICKING TOOLKIT**

FSMTB received a grant from the Seldin Haring-Smith Foundation to create A Toolkit for Identifying Human Trafficking and Fraud in Higher Education.

The toolkit, co-authored by FSMTB Executive Director Dr. Debra Persinger and Lorna Candler of the Colorado Department of Higher Education, is a practical guide for state authorizers to identify and take action on human trafficking in higher education institutions. The toolkit launched in August 2022 and is specifically designed to assist state regulators and agencies, organizations, or entities that regularly intersect with the responsibilities and duties of state regulators.



# MASSAGE THERAPY LICENSING DATABASE

Since the formation of the FSMTB, massage regulatory boards have called for a national repository of licensing information. At the Annual Delegate Assembly in 2007, state regulators voted to create an informational database that could be used to validate massage therapy applicant information, in order to combat fraud in the licensure process. This vote led to the creation of the Massage Therapy Licensing Database (MTLD).

#### VITAL INFORMATION

The information in MTLD is gathered from multiple data sources and provides a comprehensive view of therapists, including their licensure information from multiple states, if applicable; contact information, disciplinary and board action; school history and continuing education records.



#### SUPPORTING THE LICENSURE PROCESS

The Massage Therapy Licensing Database is a vital component of the FSMTB's mission to simplify and standardize the licensure process. A state's participation in MTLD makes the task of validating application information more efficient. State board/agency administrative staff can search MTLD to quickly find therapist information anywhere in the United States using simple search methods. This eliminates the need to search multiple websites for current license status of applicants, saves time and is a practical solution to ensure accurate vetting of licensure applicants.

#### **IMPACT**

With the implementation of the Interstate Massage Compact (IMpact) on the horizon, the importance of MTLD participation has significantly increased. Multistate licensure information will be submitted to MTLD by the Compact Commission and will be available to all licensing boards/agencies participating in MTI D.



# **CONTINUING EDUCATION**

#### **CE REGISTRY**

CE Registry is a registry of educators providing massage and bodywork therapy continuing education, who meet and adhere to the standards set by FSMTB. CE Registry collects information from continuing educations providers, including the completion of acceptable continuing education courses, across the country for use by state boards and agencies participating in MTLD to verify continuing education hours for license renewal. The CE Registry program is in place to meet the FSMTB mission of facilitating professional mobility and simplifying and standardizing the licensing and renewal processes.

CE Registry provides an online national course search that allows massage therapists to search for the courses they need by topic, provider, date, or location of courses.

The FSMTB Continuing Education Registry was developed at the request of the member boards of the FSMTB. It addresses concerns from regulators about accountability, the quality of continuing education, and consumer protection. CE Providers are monitored for ongoing demonstration of compliance with the FSMTB National Continuing Education Standards through feedback from students.



#### The CE Registry is a solution that meets the needs of the regulatory community by:

- 1. Supplying primary source documentation of CEs in MTLD.
- 2. Supporting the authority of state boards to determine CE for license renewal.
- **3.** Reducing the instances of CE fraud among licensees.
- **4.** Protecting the licensees from unscrupulous practices by CE providers.
- **5.** Identifying and making transparent, the providers that are not compliant with the Standards established by the FSMTB membership.

Since its inception in 2020, the CE Registry program continues to grow, with a focus on providing quality continuing education courses. The number of providers listing courses in CE Registry almost doubled in the past year. Of those who completed courses in CE Registry, survey feedback indicates over 90% course satisfaction.



# **CONTINUING EDUCATION**

#### REGULATORY EDUCATION AND COMPETENCE **HUB (REACH)**

REACH is an online education center offering continuing education courses to sustain massage therapist continuing competence and professional development, as well as directed learning to support state regulatory requirements and disciplinary remediation. REACH was developed at the request of member boards as a way to provide additional educational resources to assist state massage boards with targeted courses specific to regulatory issues, safety, and competence.

All REACH courses meet FSMTB Continuing Education Standards, which were created by expert representatives from regulatory boards. Courses in REACH can be taken online at any time, and course completion results for licensed massage therapists automatically load into FSMTB's Massage Therapy Licensing Database (MTLD). This helps to facilitate public protection among state licensing boards/agencies and supports licensure portability.



The number of REACH courses offered increased by 55%.

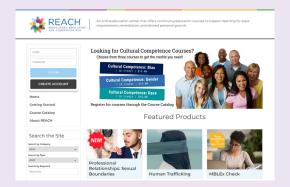


Feedback indicated that 93% of users were happy with course content.



88% would recommend REACH courses to other users.





This year, the FSMTB continued building exposure and usage of the Regulatory Education and Competence Hub (REACH). REACH courses focus on regulatory education with topics such as ethics, laws, boundaries, scope of practice, and cultural competence.

Implementation of a new Learning Management System (LMS) improved customer usability and provided an aesthetic consistent with the FSMTB website.



# **INDUSTRY RELATIONS AND OUTREACH**

FSMTB actively engages with its members through a variety of channels including a monthly email update, social media, a podcast, and virtual events. FSMTB staff also attend several massage therapy and regulatory conventions, conferences, and forums throughout the year to actively engage with other organizations and colleagues in affiliated communities as we continue to network in support of our organizational mission.

We strive to educate and inform member boards, as well as those in the massage therapy profession, on topics related to the field.

#### SCHOOL OUTREACH

FSMTB welcomed the opportunity to engage with school representatives face-to-face as more national industry school events returned to an in-person format. FSMTB staff attended the Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (ABMP) School Forum, the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA) School Summit, the Florida State Massage Therapy Association (FSMTA) Convention and the Texas Administrators of Continuing Education (TACE) Conference.

In addition to engaging with event attendees, FSMTB presented at the FSMTA and TACE events and hosted school information sessions in conjunction with the AMTA, FSMTA and TACE.

#### **ASSOCIATION COLLABORATION**

FSMTB was actively involved with the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) and the National Association of State Administrators & Supervisors of Private Schools (NASASPS) and their continued efforts pertaining to the advancement and oversight of massage therapy education.



# **INDUSTRY RELATIONS AND OUTREACH**

#### **ONLINE ENGAGEMENT**

**161,432** FSMTB website users



#### **SOCIAL MEDIA**

**FSMTB** has an active social media presence with a combined total of over 7,000 followers. We strive to keep our stakeholders up-to-date on important information regarding our organization and the massage therapy profession.











#### COMMUNICATION

**Monthly In Touch Email** 

**Massage Minds Podcast** 





# People

Volunteers · Board of Directors · Volunteer Committees · Panels & Task Forces

#### FSMTB would like to thank our volunteers for all of their support during the past year.

Our dedicated volunteers continue to contribute their time and expertise to FSMTB and the mission of supporting our Member Boards. With deepest gratitude for your commitment to serve the massage therapy regulatory community, FSMTB thanks you.



The work that you do makes a difference.

If you would like to volunteer for FSMTB, please complete a Volunteer Application at www.fsmtb.org.

# 2022 FSMTB BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**PRESIDENT** 

**Craig Knowles** 

Chair, Georgia Board of

Massage Therapy

VICE PRESIDENT

**Charlene Russell** 

Mississippi

**TREASURER** 

**Sandy Anderson** 

Executive Director, Nevada

Board of Massage Therapists

**DIRECTOR** 

**Robin Alexander** 

Texas

**DIRECTOR** 

Foad Araiinejad

Alabama Board of

Massage Therapy

DIRECTOR

Victoria Drago

Florida Board of Massage

Therapy

DIRECTOR

**Caroline Guerin** 

Texas Department of Licensing

and Regulation (TDLR)

Massage Therapy

Advisory Board

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

**David Cox** 

Maryland State Board of Massage

Therapy Examiners

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** 

**Dr. Debra Persinger** 

dpersinger@fsmtb.org



# **VOLUNTEER COMMITTEES, PANELS & TASK FORCES**

#### COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Pattie Campbell (VA) Mark Capriotti (PA) Melissa Clark (OH) Melissa Ditberner (SD) Jenny Maples (WA) Monica Marizette (CA) Sallie Urffer (PA)

#### **CE REGISTRY**

Joseph Frazier (MA) Dr. Lance Gilliland (AL) Barbara Lis (IN) Elan Schacter (NC) Jan Shaw (SC)

#### **EXAMINATION DEVELOPMENT**

Sarah Albanawi (VA) Karen Armstrong (MI) Su Bibik (MI) Ed Bolden-Greer (TN) Jeryd Bolden-Greer (TN) Vickie Branch (NH) Michelle Cordero (AZ) Margarita Cozzan (NM) Laurie Craig (GA) Alexander (Sasha) Dale (CA) Sandy Fritz (MI) Rosendo Galvez (IL) Dr. Lance Gilliland (AL) Maria Leonard (MN)

Bethany Lowrie (PA) Wendy McGinley (ND) Julia Mims (TN) Jodi Peck (AZ) Dr. Tim Reischman (NC) Drew Riffe (TX) Celina Sahagun (CA) Susan Salvo (LA) Elan Schacter (NC) Cherie Sohnen-Moe (AZ) Tracy Sullivan (CT) Kay Warren (NC) Charles Watson (KY) Aireautnei White (MO)

#### **EXAMINATION POLICY**

Board Liaison: Charlene Russell (MS) Chair: Caroline Guerin (TX) Elisabeth Barnard (NV) Ed Bolden-Greer (TN) Dr. Lance Gilliland (AL) Linda Lyter (WV)

#### **FINANCE**

Treasurer: Sandy Anderson (NV) Ed Bolden-Greer (TN) Linda Lyter (WV) Keith Warren (AL)

#### NOMINATING

Chair: Megan Maxey (WA) Karen Armstrong (MI) Carla Hedtke (WI) Kimberly Hodge (TN)

#### **POLICY**

Board Liaison/ Chair: Victoria Drago (FL) Linda Lyter (WV) Charisma Townsend (WI) Kay Warren (NC)

#### **EXAMINATION ELIGIBILITY**

Board Liaison: Robin Alexander (TX) Chair: Linda Lyter (WV) Ed Bolden-Greer (TN)

Dr. Lance Gilliland (AL)

#### LICENSE RENEWAL

Chair: Jan Shaw (SC) Barbara Lis (IN) Sharon Oliver (MD) Bianca Smith (NV) Charisma Townsend (WI) Kay Warren (NC)



# Examination item writers play an essential role within the Federation.

Their dedication and expertise allow us to provide a reliable and valid licensing examination to assess entry-level competence. This enables us to continue our mission to assist state regulatory boards in ensuring that the practice of massage therapy is provided safely and competently.

With sincere gratitude for their service and commitment, we thank our examination item writers for their diligence, support, and contribution to massage and bodywork professional standards.





# **Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards**

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