

Advocacy Letter Template: Louisiana Minimum-Hour Increase

[Dear elected official,]

I am a licensed [massage therapist/school owner/instructor] and a constituent in your district. I am writing today in support of Senate Bill 353 (SB 353), which would increase the required education hours for massage licensure from 500 to 625.

Of the 48 states that offer a massage therapy license, certification, or registration, 25 states require a minimum-hour requirement of 600 hours or more. Therefore, 50 percent of states that require a massage therapy credential mandate their massage students receive more education than their Louisiana peers.

More pressing, late last year, the US Department of Education (ED) revised Gainful Employment rules that impact schools' clock-hour programs, including massage therapy. The new rules are strict and require schools to align their program length with their state's minimum-hour education requirements.

For example: In Louisiana, a massage program's minimum-hour requirement is 500 hours. Under the new rule, as of October 1, 2024, no school in Louisiana can offer a massage program longer than 500 hours and offer students federal financial aid because the federal government requires schools to offer at least 600 hours of education to be eligible for federal funding. If Louisiana schools can offer only 500 hours of education but need 600 hours to receive federal funding, student financial assistance and school enrollment are in danger, creating barriers to entry into the massage profession.

Because of the ED's rule change, Louisiana's massage students will no longer be eligible for federal financial aid come October 2024 because massage programs are limited by Louisiana's law of 500 education hours. It is imperative that Louisiana increase its minimum-education requirements to ensure students can access federal funds for massage education.

Increasing minimum-hour requirements not only aligns Louisiana with the rest of the country, but it also reduces red tape when massage therapists want to move and need to transfer their license—Louisiana massage therapists will encounter less difficult licensure by endorsement processes if their hour requirements are substantially equivalent to or exceed those of the jurisdiction to which they are relocating.

I fully support this bill and encourage you to vote yes on SB 353. Thank you for your consideration,

[Your name]