

IN THE MATTER OF

*

BEFORE THE

RICHARD BENT

*

MARYLAND STATE BOARD

Respondent

*

OF MASSAGE THERAPY

*

EXAMINERS

License Number: M05484

*

Case Number: 24-17M

* * * * *

**ORDER FOR SUMMARY SUSPENSION OF LICENSE
TO PRACTICE MASSAGE THERAPY**

The Maryland State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners (the “Board”) hereby **SUMMARILY SUSPENDS** the license of **RICHARD BENT** (the “Respondent”), License Number M05484, to practice massage therapy in the State of Maryland. The Board takes such action pursuant to its authority under Md. Code Ann., State Gov’t § 10-226(c) (2021 Repl. Vol.), concluding that the public health, safety or welfare imperatively requires emergency action.

INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS

Based on information received by, and made known to the Board, and the investigatory information obtained by, received by and made known to and available to the Board, including the instances described below, the Board has reason to believe that the following facts are true:¹

¹ The statements regarding the Board’s investigative findings are intended to provide the Respondent with notice of the basis of the suspension. They are not intended as, and do not necessarily represent, a complete description of the evidence, either documentary or testimonial, to be offered against the Respondent in connection with this matter.

I. BACKGROUND

1. At all times relevant, the Respondent was originally licensed to practice massage therapy in Maryland on May 6, 2015, under License Number M05484. The Respondent's license status is active and is set to expire on October 31, 2024.

2. On or about February 12, 2024, the Board received a complaint from a patient (the "Patient")² alleging that on October 27, 2023, she had a two-and-a-half-hour massage session with the Respondent at his massage therapy practice in Anne Arundel County, Maryland. The Patient alleged that towards the end of the massage, the Respondent started rubbing the lips of her vagina, saying it was a nerve that would release the tissue in her toe that she had broken. The Patient further alleged that the Respondent rubbed the lips of her vagina for a minute then he put his finger in her vagina.

3. Based upon the complaint, the Board initiated an investigation of the Respondent under Case Number 24-17M.

III. BOARD INVESTIGATION

4. As part of its investigation, the Board obtained treatment records from the Respondent, obtained court records, and interviewed the Patient.

5. On March 12, 2024, the Board received documents from the Respondent including treatment records for the Patient. The treatment records revealed that the Patient was seeing the Respondent over the period of June 2022 to October 2023. The treatment records showed that the last date of therapy was October 27, 2023.

² To ensure confidentiality and privacy, the names of individuals, patients and institutions involved in this case are not disclosed in this document. The Respondent may obtain the identity of all individuals, patients, and institutions referenced in this document from the Administrative Prosecutor.

6. On March 28, 2024, the Board's Investigator interviewed the Patient under oath. The Patient stated, in part:

- a. She became familiar with the Respondent when a friend of hers recommended him for a massage. She received massage services from the Respondent over thirty (30) times from the period of summer 2022 until October 2023.
- b. On October 27, 2023, she appeared at the Respondent's massage studio on the bottom floor of his home for a two-and-a-half-hour massage. Her toe was hurt and that was one of the Respondent's focuses during the session. It was a normal massage until the last fifteen or twenty minutes when the Respondent said that he didn't feel that he released the nerve from her toe up into her hip. The Respondent then made his way down her bikini line, started rubbing on her right side and the lips of her vagina, which was very unusual. She froze and wasn't sure what was happening. The Respondent then put his finger into her vagina very quickly. After this occurred, the massage lasted about ten more minutes and then it was complete. Once the massage ended, there was no conversation between her and the Respondent.
- c. After the incident on October 27, 2023, she contacted her friend that recommended the Respondent, her husband, and another friend. She later reported the incident to the police.

7. Court records from the District Court of Maryland for Anne Arundel County (the "Court") show that on March 20, 2024, the State of Maryland charged the Respondent with one count of rape second degree, one count of sexual offense fourth degree – sexual contact, and one count of second degree assault in case number D-07-CR-24-005375. On March 22, 2024, the Court held a bail review hearing during which it released the Respondent on his own recognizance with conditions including that the Respondent was not to perform massage therapy within six inches of the groin area and no contact with the Patient.

8. Maryland Judiciary Case Search results showed that on April 19, 2024, a grand jury in the Circuit Court of Maryland for Anne Arundel County issued an indictment charging the Respondent with the following offenses related to the incidents described in the Patient's complaint:

(a) Second Degree Rape;³

(b) Sexual Offense Fourth Degree – Sexual Contact;⁴

(c) Second Degree Assault.⁵

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Based upon the foregoing Investigative Findings, the Board concludes as a matter of law that the public health, safety, or welfare imperatively requires emergency action, pursuant to Md. Code Ann., State Gov't § 10-226(c) (2021 Repl. Vol.).

ORDER

It is, by a majority of the Board, hereby:

ORDERED that pursuant to the authority vested in the Board by Md. Code Ann., State Gov't 10-226(c)(2), the Respondent's license to practice massage therapy in the State of Maryland is hereby **SUMMARILY SUSPENDED**; and it is further

ORDERED that there will be a Show Cause Hearing on **May 22, 2024 at 11:30 a.m.** before the Board at **4201 Patterson Avenue, Room 110, Baltimore, MD 21215**; and it is further

³ Md. Code Ann., Criminal Law § 3-304.

⁴ Md. Code Ann., Criminal Law § 3-308(b)(1).

⁵ Md. Code Ann., Criminal Law § 3-203.

ORDERED that if, the suspension of the Respondent's license is continued following a Show Cause Hearing, the Respondent has the right to a full evidentiary hearing before the Board and a hearing will be scheduled before the Board if the Respondent submits a written request for an evidentiary hearing to the Board **no later than thirty (30) days from the date of the Board's written decision issued after the Show Cause Hearing**; and it is further

ORDERED that if the Respondent does not submit a timely written request to the Board for an evidentiary hearing within 30 days from the date of the Board's written decision issued after the Show Cause Hearing, the Respondent shall have waived all rights now and in the future to any hearing on the merits of the summary suspension of the Respondent's license and the factual allegations contained in this Order for Summary Suspension; and it is further

ORDERED that this Order for Summary Suspension shall remain in effect and the summary suspension of the Respondent's license shall continue until further Order of the Board; and it is further

ORDERED that this is an Order of the Board, and as such, is a **PUBLIC DOCUMENT** pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Gen. Provisions § 4-101 *et seq.* (2014).

04/29/2024
Date

Sharon Oliver
Sharon J Oliver, MBA
Executive Director
Maryland State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners