

## A Cautionary Tale

Individual state laws can inform and impact other states' legislation. We can learn valuable lessons by looking at what is happening in other states.

In late December 2020 in Ohio, language was added *at the last minute* to bill HB442 about occupational licenses that removed the Oriental Medicine License from regulation by the Medical Board and was signed into law by the governor. The result was that it:

- made the practice of herbal therapy an unlicensed and unregulated activity
- jeopardized the herbal program(s) in the state's hospital systems (Cleveland Clinic's Chinese herbal medicine program is now on hold)
- eliminated the Oriental Medicine Practitioner (OMP) license as a profession\* under the State Medical Board of Ohio.

The goal of this legislature was to reduce overly burdensome licensure and align with current trends in the US of deregulation. It was not a purposeful attack on herbal medicine or the acupuncture profession, other professions were included as well. The language to remove Oriental Medicine from licensure was added at the last minute *without consulting* the Medical Board or any license holder in the state about its impact.

The Ohio Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (OAAOM) is working with legislators to draft a stand-alone bill to repeal the OMP portion of HB442 and working hard to educate on the importance of herbal therapy regulation for patient safety and professional validation. They hope to have secured sponsors to submit a bill when the 2021 session begins in June.

So, this cautionary tale brings to light that it is imperative that we are all aware of the bills that are being introduced that can affect our ability to practice, and that we are consistently building and maintaining positive relationships with our legislators. If you have a relationship with your legislator, it is much easier to access and inform them of our position when needed.

FSOMA has Rutledge & Ecenia to lobby on our behalf and watch out for legislation which may impact us. You can also visit [www.fsoma.org](http://www.fsoma.org) to see a live map of all current legislation in Florida on the [Bill Tracker Map](#), which can be found towards the bottom right of the home page.

All practitioners must connect with their legislators, there is never a bad time to build and nurture relationships with your legislators! Please contact FSOMA to learn more about how you can effectively advocate for our profession. [Here is the link](#) to find your Florida Representative and [this one](#) finds your Senator.

Currently there are not any concerning bills pending in Florida, the FSOMA Summer advocacy campaign is to visit your Florida Representative and Senator in their home district and make a connection. [Contact us](#) if you need support with this.

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\*In Ohio, there was an Acupuncture only license and an Oriental Medicine license that included Chinese herbal therapy in their scope. The new law has made the practice of herbal therapy an unlicensed and unregulated activity. ~~and put practitioners in a legal limbo.~~