



July 19, 2021

Hon. Raja Krishnamoorthi
Chairman
Oversight Committee, Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy
6430 O'Neill House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Hon. Michael Cloud
Ranking Member
Oversight Committee, Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy
6430 O'Neill House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Krishnamoorthi and Ranking Member Cloud:

The American Association of Cosmetology Schools (AACCS) is made up of more than 600 state licensed, accredited schools nationwide that are educating students in health and wellness careers. AACCS schools educate students for careers in cosmetology, barbering, esthetician, nails, and massage therapy.

We recently became aware of the July 6, 2021 letter sent by the Chairman to Secretary Cardona regarding a report prepared by the Seldin/Harding-Smith Foundation (Report) that highlights illicit and illegal activities by the American Academy of Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine (AAAOM), accredited by Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine. The State uncovered evidence of AAAOM providing fake diplomas for massage programs to support sex trafficking and illicit sex businesses.

Our members are horrified by these details relating to AAAOM. This institution is not and has never been an AACCS member. We believe any school or individual that is knowingly putting a student in harm's way through support for, or association with sex trafficking, should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. If AACCS received any credible suspicion of these types of terrible wrong doings, our Board of Directors would be fully prepared to invoke their authority within AACCS' bylaws to remove such school from AACCS membership.

We support the Chairman's investigation to identify the scope of any illicit activity involving school offering cosmetology and massage programs. We are grateful for the Report's focus on finding solutions to sex trafficking, but we are also saddened that the Report completely neglects the role schools can and should play in helping identify and prevent the spread of sex trafficking. This is not a new issue. At least one of our members was approached several years ago by

individuals seeking to enroll groups of young female students who could only attend at unusual hours. The owner quickly identified the suspicious nature of their needs and rejected their request for enrollment.

Our schools are in the best position to train our students to identify and respond to suspicious activity and have been including curriculum enhancements in our training about how to identify a sex trafficking victim. As an association, we have been spearheading educational initiatives around identifying the signs of human trafficking for our students. Just this year, our educational partner Milady offered a month of free online training to any student enrolled in a health and wellness program at any AACS member school to participate so they could understand and identify the signs of those suffering from these exact types of human atrocities.

We stand together as a community to support any of the students who have been harmed by these egregious acts of human indecency and work with any state board, accrediting agency, or the federal government to assist these students in any way possible. We want nothing more than to rid our industry of these terrible crimes. The goal of all AACS members is to professionalize the beauty and wellness industry and raise the level of respect for this profession. Such activities are horrific and must be quelled to protect the futures for our students and graduates and the reputation of our members.

Finally, the Report notes that “statewide licensure standards add an important layer of oversight that can protect students from these kinds of abuses; Minnesota is one of only four states without statewide massage therapy licensure standards, leaving municipalities responsible for regulating the profession.” State licensure and regulation of the beauty and wellness industry is essential to consumer health and safety, and efforts to de-regulate such programs at the state level pose a risk to ensuring quality control in the provision of such intimate consumer services.

We stand ready to assist the Committee in supporting greater solutions to illegal activities.

Sincerely,



Michael Halmon
Acting Chair

Cc: Hon. Secretary Miguel Cardona
House Oversight Committee Members
House Human Trafficking Caucust Members