

IN THE MATTER OF

IVAN HENSON, RMP

Respondent

Registration Number: R03668

BEFORE THE

MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF

MASSAGE THERAPY EXAMINERS

Case Number: 25-22M

FINAL DECISION AND ORDER OF REVOCATION

Procedural Background

By a complaint dated December 8, 2024, the Maryland State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners (the “Board”) was notified by a patient that Ivan Henson, Registered Massage Practitioner (“RMP”), Registration Number R03668 (the “Respondent”), allegedly sexually assaulted her during a massage. In addition, by a separate complaint dated December 2, 2024, the Respondent’s employer filed a separate complaint regarding the same alleged incident.

Based on those complaints, the Board initiated an investigation. As a result of that investigation, on or about December 10, 2025, the Board notified the Respondent in writing (the “Notice”) that it was charging his registration to practice as an RMP in the State of Maryland with several violations of the Maryland Massage Therapy Act. Specifically, the Notice charged the Respondent with violations of Md. Code Ann, Health Occ. (“HO”), § 6-308(a):

- (8) Does an act that is inconsistent with generally accepted professional standards in the practice of massage therapy;
- (11) Has violated any provision of this title;
- (20) Engages in conduct that violates the professional code of ethics; and
- (21) Knowingly does an act that has been determined by the Board to be a violation of the Board's regulations.

Specific to the statutory violation of HO § 6-308(a)(20) and § 6-308(a)(21), the Board alleged that the Respondent violated the following provisions of the Code of Maryland Regulations (“COMAR”):

10.65.03.03 Code of Ethics - Standards of Practice.

A. A licensee or registrant shall be concerned primarily with the welfare of the client.

C. A license holder or registration holder shall:

- (1) Use professional discretion and integrity in relationships with members of the public and health care community;
- (2) Engage in professional conduct at all times, with honesty, integrity, self-respect, and fairness;
- ...
- (5) At all times respect the client's dignity, autonomy, and privacy;
- (6) Practice massage therapy only as defined in the scope of practice set out in Health Occupations Article, § 6-101, Annotated Code of Maryland[.]

D. A license holder or registration holder may not:

- (2) Knowingly engage in or condone behavior that:
...

(d) Involves moral turpitude.

10.65.03.05 Code of Ethics - Professional Boundaries.

A. A license holder or registration holder shall:

- (1) Maintain professional boundaries, even when the client, staff member, or student initiates crossing the professional boundaries of the professional relationship; and

- (2) Respect and maintain professional boundaries and respect the client's, staff member's, or student's reasonable expectation of professional conduct.

B. A license holder or registration holder may not:

- (1) Exploit a relationship with a client, staff member, or student for the licensee's or registrant's personal advantage, including, but not limited to, a personal, sexual, romantic, or financial relationship;
- (2) Engage in a sexually intimate act with a client; or
- (3) Engage in sexual misconduct that includes, but is not limited to:
 - (a) Therapeutic deception;
 - (b) Non bona fide treatment; or
 - (c) A sexually exploitative relationship.

The Board's Notice also informed the Respondent that he faced potential sanctions upon his registration. On March 30, 2026, the Board notified the Respondent that an evidentiary hearing in his case was scheduled for April 22, 2026, at 1:30 p.m., via the virtual platform Google Meet.

The Board sent the Notice of Charges and the Notice of Hearing via regular and certified mail to the Respondent's last known address of record pursuant to HO § 6-309 and Md. Code Ann., State Gov't § 10-207. Furthermore, Md. Code Ann., State Gov't § 10-209(c) provides that a person holding a license shall be deemed to have had reasonable opportunity to know of the fact of service if: 1) the person is required by law to notify the agency of a change of address within a specified period of time; 2) the person failed to notify the agency in accordance with the law; 3) the agency mailed the notice to the address of record; and 4) the agency did not have actual notice

of the change of address prior to service. The Board has received no notice that the Respondent has changed his address as required by HO 6-305(d)(1); therefore, the Board finds that service of the Notice was proper.

On April 22, 2026, a quorum of the Board was present, and an evidentiary hearing was held via the virtual meeting platform, Google Meet. An Assistant Attorney General from the Maryland Office of the Attorney General's Health Occupations Prosecution and Litigation Unit was present and presented the State's case against the Respondent. The Respondent failed to appear despite being properly notified.

Evidentiary Exhibits and Witnesses

State's Exhibits

1. Complaint from Patient A, dated December 8, 2024 (3 pages).
2. Complaint from Employer B, dated December 2, 2024 (9 pages).
3. Complaint Email, received by the Board on or about July 8, 2024 (1 page).
4. Transcript of Investigative Interview of Patient A, dated February 6, 2025 (11 pages).
5. Transcript of Investigative Interview of Employer B's Director of Body Work, dated February 14, 2025 (6 pages).
6. Transcript of Investigative Interview of Employer B's Director of Body Work, dated February 21, 2025 (7 pages).
7. Excerpt from Employer B's Employee Manual, "Non-Negotiable Draping Principles" (3 pages).
8. Screenshot of the Respondent's Completion of Employer B's Employee Training (1 page).
9. Transcript of Investigative Interview of Employer B's Manager, dated February 20, 2025 (6 pages).
10. Maryland State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners – Notice of Hearing (including the

Board's Notice of Charges, dated December 10, 2025), dated March 30, 2026 (15 pages).

State's Witnesses

1. Board Investigator C
2. Patient A
3. Employer B's Director of Body Work

The Respondent's Exhibits

None submitted.

The Respondent's Witnesses

None provided.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Based on the totality of the record before it, the Board finds that:

1. As a health occupations board, the Board is established as an instrument of State policy to "protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public." Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. § 1-102.

2. At all times relevant to this Order, the Respondent was registered to practice as a registered massage practitioner, registration number R03668.

3. By complaint dated December 2, 2024, the Director for Body Work ("Director B") for a massage facility (the "Facility") in Cockeyville, Maryland submitted a complaint to the Board. (See State's Exhibit 2.) The complaint alleged in relevant part that:

On 11/25/24 Massage client [Patient A] was scheduled for a 90 minute custom massage with [the Respondent] in our Cockeyville location.

Following the appointment [Patient A] exited into the lobby area [sic] and was extremely distressed and trying to leave very quickly. According to our front desk employee [...], [Patient A] said that she had experienced a very inappropriate massage.

According to [the front desk employee], as she and [Patient A] were talking, [the Respondent] came into the lobby area where [Patient A] was standing and said, “I’m sorry, I know I went too far.”

...

[The Facility’s Manager] detailed for us what [Patient A] had reported: [The Respondent] was working on her gluteals and upper hamstrings. The area was undraped and he was rubbing closer and closer to her gluteal cleft. [Patient A] stated that [the Respondent] moved her legs wider apart and was going to “go inside” and at that point [Patient A] asked him to stop. She also stated that [the Respondent] slapped her gluteals.

(*Id.* at p. 5.) The complaint further detailed how Patient A believed that she had been “sexually assaulted” and that, pursuant to an internal Facility investigation, the Respondent stated that he undraped Patient A’s gluteals and worked “skin on skin” and that he did not obtain informed consent to remove the draping. (*Id.*)

4. By a separate complaint dated December 8, 2024, Patient A notified the Board regarding the Respondent’s alleged misconduct on November 25, 2024. (*See* State’s Exhibit 1.) In relevant part, Patient A alleged:

...

It was during the last 15 minutes or so of the massage that the sexual assault occurred. It was a slippery slope of events where [the Respondent] slowly pushed the boundaries of professionalism and ultimately crossed the line into sexual assault. [The Respondent] – removed the drape from my right buttocks to do glut work. I have had glut work as part of my massage in the past - normally the masseuse will confirm that you are comfortable with glute work. [The Respondent] did not ask. I also believe that in all the other times I have had glute work done - the drape has never been removed by any other masseuse. Glute work is done with the drape on and the massage is through the drape. [The Respondent] then moved onto massage my left buttocks but instead of covering my right buttocks back up - he took the drape totally off from my buttocks so that my entire buttocks was exposed. I have confirmed with [Facility] management that this is totally against their protocol. The drape should never cover once. Mr. Henson proceeded to massage my buttocks - opening and closing my buttocks cheeks numerous times. I was very uncomfortable and I just wanted the massage to end - but he kept doing it

over and over. With the lights not dimmed I can imagine that he was able to see my genitals as he opened and closed my buttocks. At some point [the Respondent] slapped my right buttocks with his hand. He then took the drape and with his fingers touched my genitals through the drape. This was no accidental brush by the genital area - it was an intentional touching. I immediately responded Knock it off! [The Respondent] replied - I apologize. [The Respondent] covered me back up and the massage ended within a few minutes. He asked me if I wanted any water and I said no. He left the room. I got dressed. As I exited the room I could not even look at him. I went to the front desk to speak to the receptionist [...] but she had gone for the night. I told the other receptionist that I needed to speak to [...] and she said [...] would not be back until Wednesday. I said that I had just had an inappropriate massage and that I needed management to call me ASAP. During my conversation with the receptionist [the Respondent] came up to the front area twice and was just “hanging around”. The second time he again stated “Again I want to apologize” at which time I cut him off and said that what he did was inappropriate. He was making me uncomfortable and that he needed to leave (the reception area). [The Respondent] did leave the reception area at that time.

(State’s Exhibit 1, p. 2.).

5. Based on the separate complaints received by the Board regarding the Respondent, the Board initiated an investigation.

6. As part of its investigation, on or about February 6, 2025, a Board investigator (“Investigator C”) interviewed Patient A. (*See* State’s Exhibit 3.) During the interview and while under oath, Patient A corroborated details made in her complaint. Notably, Patient A stated that the Respondent undraped her buttocks and massaged them directly (*id.* at p. 15); that the Respondent failed to discuss or obtain any consent from Patient A prior to removing the drape (*id.* at p. 16); that the Respondent “open[ed] and clos[ed] both of her [buttock] cheeks (*id.* at p. 15); that the Respondent slapped Patient A’s right buttock with an open palm (*id.*); that the Respondent began to massage Patient A’s genitals before telling him to stop (*id.*); and that the Respondent apologized twice for his conduct (*id.*).

7. On February 14, 2025, Investigator C interviewed Director B. (*See* State’s Exhibit 4). While under oath, Director B corroborated her complaint that the Respondent admitted to undraping Patient A’s gluteal area and massaging her skin directly (*id.* at p. 26); and that the Respondent admitted to failing to obtain informed consent from Patient A to undrape and massage her gluteal area. (*Id.*)

8. On February 20, 2025, Board Investigator C interviewed the Facility’s Manager, who was on duty on November 25, 2024, the date of the incident involving Patient A. (*See* State’s Exhibit 8.) According to the Facility’s Manager, on the date of the incident, she was alerted by the Facility’s front desk staff that Patient A had a “bad massage.” (*Id.* at p. 42.) The Facility’s Manager stated that she called Patient A, who was “very upset” about her massage with the Respondent, “because of inappropriate touching.” (*Id.*) Specifically, the Facility’s Manager was told by Patient A that Patient A was “laying on her stomach” as the Respondent was working on her gluteal muscles and hamstrings, “uncovered, or undraped, which is against [the Facility’s] protocol.” (*Id.*) The Facility’s Manager also stated that Patient A described that the Respondent “attempted to put his hand between [Patient A’s butt cheeks].” (*Id.*)

9. As a result of the Board’s investigative findings, on December 10, 2025, the Board issued to the Respondent a “Notice of Charges,” which charged him with several violations of the Maryland Massage Therapy Act, as stated above, and put the Respondent on notice of the potential for sanctions against his registration to practice in the State of Maryland. (*See* State’s Exhibit 9, pp. 49-61.) The Notice indicated that, under Maryland law, the Respondent had the right to contest the Board’s charges at an evidentiary hearing. (*Id.* at pp. 60-61.) Accordingly, on March 30, 2026, the Board notified the Respondent that an evidentiary hearing in his case was scheduled for April

22, 2026, at 1:30 p.m., via the virtual platform Google Meet. (*Id.* at p. 47.) Both the Notice of Charges and the Notice of Hearing advised the Respondent that, if he failed to appear at the scheduled hearing, the Board could nevertheless hear and determine the case. (*Id.* at pp. 48, 51.)

10. The Board sent both the Notice of Charges and the Notice of Hearing via regular and certified mail to the Respondent's last known address of record pursuant to HO § 6-309 and Md. Code Ann., State Gov't § 10-207. Furthermore, Md. Code Ann., State Gov't § 10-209(c) provides that a person holding a license¹ shall be deemed to have had reasonable opportunity to know of the fact of service if: 1) the person is required by law to notify the agency of a change of address within a specified period of time; 2) the person failed to notify the agency in accordance with the law; 3) the agency mailed the notice to the address of record; and 4) the agency did not have actual notice of the change of address prior to service. The Board has received no notice that the Respondent has changed his address as required by HO § 6-305(d)(1); therefore, the Board finds that service of both the Notice of Charges and the Notice of Hearing was proper. *See Maryland State Bd. of Nursing v. Sesay*, 224 Md. App. 432 (2015).

11. On April 22, 2026, a quorum of the Board was present, and a hearing was held before the Board as scheduled. (Transcript ("Tr."), pp. 1-42.) The State was represented by an Assistant Attorney General from the Health Occupations Prosecution and Litigation unit. (*Id.* at p. 2.) The Respondent failed to appear. (*Id.*) Despite his failure to appear, the hearing went forward pursuant to HO § 6-309(f).

¹ Under the Administrative Procedure Act, a "license" includes a registration. *See* Md. Code Ann., State Gov't § 10-202(e)(3)(v).

12. At the hearing before the Board, Board Investigator C testified regarding the Board's investigation and findings. (Tr., pp. 11-24.) Besides testifying to the procedural history of the investigation, (*id.* at pp. 12-14), and the investigative interviews she conducted (*id.* at pp. 15-19), Board Investigator C also testified that she obtained the Facility's draping policies. (*Id.* at pp. 20-22.) Specifically, during Board Investigator C's investigation, she obtained the Facility's "Non-Negotiable Draping Principles." (*See* State's Exhibit 6.) According to that document:

Draping is of the highest importance to maintain the guest's privacy and sense of security, provide a professional boundary for the session, provide warmth, as well as to always adhere to MBLEX [Massage & Bodywork Licensing Examination] and State of Maryland Licensing Regulations.

(*Id.*) The document further describes the "non-negotiable" draping principles as:

- Only the area being massaged is undraped.
- The genital area is never undraped. The breast area-especially nipples-in women are never undraped.
- Don't massage under the drape.
- Keep lotion off the drape (A lotioned drape on the skin feels uncomfortable.)
- Abdominal and gluteal work are only permitted with verbal informed consent and are only to be performed through the sheet. Discuss this during your intake when giving your session plan.
 - Tell them what you are doing so that they are more comfortable, for example: "You mentioned that both your lower back and legs are tight. I suspect that because of that, your gluteals are likely tight as well and may even be contributing to the low back pain. May I massage your gluteals to help alleviate any tension in that area? I will work through the sheet, so you will remain covered when I'm working that area."
- Undergarments are a boundary-don't move or reposition them.

(*Id.*) Board Investigator C also testified that she obtained the Respondent's training records from the Facility, indicating that he took and completed the Facility's training, including training regarding the Facility's draping policies. (*Id.* at p. 22; State's Exhibit 7.)

13. The State also called Patient A to testify. (Tr., pp. 25-32.) Regarding the incident, Patient A testified:

It started with, [the Respondent] did glute work on me, which I've had glute work done before. Usually the masseuse will say, do you want glute work done? He didn't ask. And he removed the drape from my right buttocks, which is not normal at all. And he started massaging my right buttocks, and then he went to my left buttocks, but instead of covering up my right cheek, he pulled the drape totally down so my entire buttocks was exposed.

And [the Respondent] started massaging or opening and closing both of my butt cheeks. And -- and I just kept resisting. And in my head, I just kept thinking, like, this is not happening; like, what is going on here? And at some point-- so he did that for a little bit. And then at some point, he took his open palm and slapped my right buttock cheek with that, and then eventually he took his hand through the sheet and started to massage my vagina.

And at that point, I just said, knock it off. And [the Respondent] stated, I apologize, and then the massage wrapped up. He asked me if I wanted a glass of water. I said no. He left the room. I got dressed, walked out, could not even look at him. And his room was very close to the front desk. I didn't have far to walk. I walked out, and I immediately said to the receptionist, I want to speak to Jessica, who's the receptionist that I know. The girl that was there, I wasn't familiar with. And she said she was gone and wouldn't be back until Wednesday. And I told her I had just had an inappropriate massage and I needed to talk to management right away.

(Tr., pp. 28-29.)

14. Finally, the State called Director B to testify. (*See* Tr., pp. 32-38.) In relevant part, Director B testified:

I asked him to explain to me what had happened, and he said that, as a massage therapist and a man, he had made a mistake and that the service had been happening in a normal way. And he began to work on the client's glute area -- gluteal area -- and that the client began to moan.

He said at that point he moved away from the gluteal area and started working her back, and that the client asked him to return to the gluteal area, which he did. He said the client began to moan more. And he said at that point he should have referenced our zero-tolerance policy, which we have posted in the treatment rooms and ended the service, but he didn't. And he said at that point the client moved her legs wider, and his words were that he "took the bait" and the client then ended the service, and that's when I got the phone call.

I asked Ivan if he had undraped the client's gluteal area and worked skin on skin, and he said yes. I asked him if he had gotten informed consent to do that, and he said no. And so at that point, I let him know that undraping the glutes is a violation of our draping policy, which he was trained on, and that because of that violation, in addition to the serious nature of the client's complaint, we were terminating him. And I terminated him on the spot.

(*Id.* at pp. 34-35.)

Discussion

A. THE DISCIPLINARY CHARGES

The Board may reprimand any registration holder, place a registration holder on probation, or suspend or revoke a registration for any violation of HO § 6-308. *See* HO § 6-308(a). This provision provided the underlying authority for, and the necessary legal elements of, the issuance of the Board's "Notice of Charges" on December 10, 2025. Indeed, while the Respondent in this case was charged with four separate statutory violations, the Board need only to find that the Respondent violated one of those provisions to sanction his registration. HO § 6-308 provides the authority for this Order.

As a preliminary matter, the Respondent did not appear at the hearing, nor did he, based on the record before the Board, participate in the Board's investigation in any meaningful way. As fully set forth above, the Board finds that it provided the Respondent with adequate notice of his

charges and of the hearing. Nevertheless, the Board is authorized to hear and determine the case under HO § 6-309(f).

Because the Respondent failed to appear at the hearing, the Respondent has functionally not contested the charges against him. Thus, the Board accepts all of them as true and accurate. Specifically, the Board finds that the Respondent violated HO § 6-308(a)(8) (“Does an act that is inconsistent with generally accepted professional standards in the practice of massage therapy”) on November 25, 2024 by (1) inappropriately draping Patient A; (2) not obtaining informed consent from Patient A prior to removing her draping and massaging her gluteal area skin-to-skin; (3) slapping Patient A’s gluteal area and spreading her buttocks; and (4) touching her genital area. Each of these failures constitutes a grave violation of basic principles of massage therapy. To be sure, the spirit of these principles is mirrored in the Facility’s training and policies, which the Respondent apparently took and completed to no avail. Based on this finding, the Board further finds that the Respondent violated HO § 6-308(a)(20) (“Engages in conduct that violates the professional code of ethics”) because each of the above-listed violations clearly violates the tenets set forth in the Board’s Code of Ethics. In particular, the Respondent violated COMAR 10.65.03.03.C(5) (“A licensee or registrant shall...[a]t all times respect the client’s dignity, autonomy, and privacy”) by removing Patient A’s draping without her explicit and informed consent. Further, the Respondent violated COMAR 10.65.03.03.D(2)(d) (“A licensee or registrant may not...[k]nowingly engage in or condone behavior that...[i]nvolves moral turpitude”) with his grossly inappropriate actions on November 25, 2024, including touching Patient A’s genital area and slapping and spreading her buttocks. The Respondent violated COMAR 10.65.03.05 (“Professional Boundaries”), which states in relevant part:

- C. A license holder or registration holder shall:
- (1) Maintain professional boundaries, even when the client, staff member, or student initiates crossing the professional boundaries of the professional relationship; and
 - (2) Respect and maintain professional boundaries and respect the client's, staff member's, or student's reasonable expectation of professional conduct.
- D. A license holder or registration holder may not:
- ...
- (2) Engage in a sexually intimate act with a client; or
 - (3) Engage in sexual misconduct that includes, but is not limited to:
 - (a) Therapeutic deception;
 - (b) Non bona fide treatment; or
 - (c) A sexually exploitative relationship.

Slapping and spreading the buttocks or touching someone's genital area is a non-bona fide treatment, and the Board finds this conduct as close as one can get to a *per se* boundary violation, in that there is no explanation or set of circumstances that could justify that conduct.

The remaining charges of HO § 6-308(a)(11) ("Has violated any provision of this title") and § 6-308(a)(21) ("Knowingly does an act that has been determined by the Board to be a violation of the Board's regulations") can be dismissed as duplicative.

B. SANCTION

Turning to the appropriate sanction, it is well established that health occupation boards, including the State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners, exist to protect the public. *See Unnamed Physician v. Commission on Medical Discipline*, 285 Md. 1, 8-9 (1979). Furthermore,

a healthcare professional's right to practice is conditional, subject to the Board's objective of protecting and preserving public health. *Board of Physicians v. Felsenberg*, 351 Md. 288, 305-06 (1998). The Board finds that the Respondent's misconduct falls within category H(3) of the Board's sanctioning guidelines. *See* COMAR 10.65.09.06.H(3). The range of potential sanctions under category H(3) goes from a minimum sanction of suspension for years, without stay for at least 90 days, to a maximum sanction of revocation. *Id.*

In the instant case, the Board believes the maximum sanction is necessary. The Respondent's conduct was egregious and lacked any explanation that can be reasonably grounded in clinical or therapeutic principles. The Respondent's complete disregard of any of the basic tenets of patient autonomy, dignity, privacy, and personal boundaries indicates that he is not fit to practice massage therapy in this State. His license is revoked.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

In this case, based on the foregoing Findings of Fact, the Board concludes that the Respondent violated Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. § 6-308(a) as follows:

- (8) Does an act that is inconsistent with generally accepted professional standards in the practice of massage therapy; and
- (20) Engages in conduct that violates the professional code of ethics, specifically COMAR 10.65.03.03.C(5), COMAR 10.65.03.03.D(2)(d), and COMAR 10.65.03.05.

The Board shall dismiss the charges alleging violations of HO § 6-308(a)(11) and (21) as duplicative of the above.

ORDER

Based upon the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, it is hereby:

ORDERED that the charges set forth in the "Notice of Charges" issued on December 10,

2025, alleging violations of HO § 6-308(a)(11) and (21) are hereby **DISMISSED**; and it is further

ORDERED that the Respondent's registration to practice as a registered massage practitioner in the State of Maryland, registration number R03668, shall be **REVOKED**; and it is further

ORDERED that this Order goes into effect upon the signature of the Board's Executive Director, who signs on behalf of the Board; and it is further

ORDERED that for purposes of public disclosure and as permitted by Md. Code Ann., Gen. Prov. § 4-333(b)(6), this document consists of the foregoing Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Order, and is reportable to any entity to whom the Board is obligated to report; and it is further

ORDERED that this Order is a Final Order and as such is a **PUBLIC DOCUMENT** pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Gen. Prov. § 4-333(b)(6) and Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. § 1-607.

05/27/2026
Date

Signature on File
Sharon J. Oliver, MBA
Executive Director
Maryland State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners

NOTICE OF APPEAL RIGHTS

Any person aggrieved by a final decision of the Board under Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. § 6-308(a) may take a direct judicial appeal within thirty (30) days as provided by Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. § 6-310; Maryland Code Ann., State Gov't § 10-222; and Title 7, Chapter 200 of the Maryland Rules, including Md. Rule 7-203 ("Time for Filing Action").

NOTICE OF ASSESSMENT OF COSTS

Pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. § 6-309(g) and its implementing regulation at COMAR 10.65.02.06.B, the Respondent shall be responsible for costs as specified in a separately issued verified invoice.