Client: Not in Our Name! Campaign

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Project: Media Letter

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**Not in Our Name!**

*Massage Therapists Against Sex Trafficking*

Pooling Resources to End Modern-Day Slavery

Dear Agent of (Media Outlet):

My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and I am a licensed/certified massage therapist with (name of business) .

**The Situation**

As you may know, national awareness of the commercial sex trafficking industry is on the rise. This is a crucial shift that will liberate so many children and young adults from modern-day slavery. These illicit operations frequently use terminology from the massage profession in their advertising to disguise their activities. As a group, we massage therapists find this unacceptable. We wish to assist you in your efforts to expose instances of trafficking in our area, and facilitate the public’s demand for prosecution of these criminals.

**The Story**

Please see the attached list of operations I found online brazenly promoting illicit activities in our area, some under the guise of massage therapy. Businesses like these often serve as fronts for international and domestic sex trafficking of young women and children who are virtually imprisoned and forced to have sex with numerous men per day. Though the earning potential for these businesses is astronomical, the victims often receive no more than sustenance-level room and board while the profits go to their traffickers or pimps. It’s happening right under our noses, in almost every town in the US, every day. Law enforcement across the nation is cracking down on these operations with mass arrests for perpetrators and social services provided for victims. The media is responding by creating headlines and bolstering readership and awareness of the problem. Our industry hopes you get to cover many such stories as this wave of justice passes through our town.

**Language Is So Important**

As you know, language and word choice are very important to the way readers perceive issues in the media. Due to their deceptive marketing, operations like these undermine public perception of the massage profession and create confusion that threatens practitioners’ safety. As a licensed/certified massage professional, I do not wish to be sought out by predators looking for activities offered in these advertisements.

You will be the voice to the public as these operations are exposed and shut down, so I am asking you to be conscious of the language you use. Massage and other bodywork modalities are studied and practiced by professional individuals and sought out by the general public to improve overall health and wellbeing and ***do not include sexual activity of any kind. There is no such thing as illicit, erotic or sensual massage in our industry.*** There is wonderful, nurturing and beneficial massage, and then there are people conducting criminal activity in our name, posing as massage therapists and massage establishments. Therefore it is inappropriate to use the term “massage parlor” in reporting on this issue. It is a derogatory term, a euphemism for brothel, and erroneously associates massage with the sex industry.

Here’s the shift the media has been making in its narrative as the mechanics of these operations have come to light:

Wrong: “Four young women, ages 15, 17, 17, and 18, were arrested today for prostitution at a massage parlor on 6th street. They are being held on $5,000 bail ….massage parlor…. massage parlor… massage parlor…”

Right: “Four sexually exploited young women, ages 15, 17, 17, and 18, were rescued from a sex trafficking operation disguised as a massage establishment on 6th street and turned over to social services. Seven men were charged in the incident. Three were running the operation and will be charged with sex trafficking, and four were customers who will be charged with solicitation of sex for money. These men are pictured below. Their names are, from left to right, are …. This operation…. This sex trafficking operation… this criminal operation…”

**More Information**

Despite the best efforts of national and local regulatory bodies, false massage certifications and licensure are in circulation, but here are some tips to help you differentiate legitimate businesses from sex trafficking operations:

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| Massage and Bodywork | Criminal Activity Posing as Massage |
|  |  |
| Advertise by listing modality types such as sports massage, lymphatic drainage, reflexology and shiatsu, and their corresponding health benefits. | Advertise using victim’s physical characteristics such as age, nationality and manner of dress. Also use words like “sensual” and “erotic”. |
| Advertise via legitimate channels such as individual websites, integrative healthcare collectives, brochures and on-site promotions. | Advertise in the Yellow Pages, under Adult Services in local publications and sex-seeker sites such as:   * Backpage.com * USAsexguide.info * Rubmaps.com * Naughtyreviews.com * Yelp.com |
| Operate during day and evening hours, not between 10pm and 6am. | Offer all hours of operation. |
|  |  |

Education, licensure and certification requirements for massage therapists vary by state. If you have any questions about requirements for massage therapists in your area, please contact NCBTMB at 630-627-8000. (another line?)

Your partner in eradicating sex trafficking,

(sign here)

(attachment/list)