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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **FSMTB Hosts Successful 2026 Washington Human Trafficking Summit**

OVERLAND PARK, Kansas – January 12, 2026 – The Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards hosted another successful Summit to provide education and insights into the intersection of human trafficking with massage. The most recent Summit was held in Tacoma, Washington, on January 9, 2026, where interest from the law enforcement community exceeded space limitations.

The Summit was a professional education forum designed for state regulators, law enforcement, and professionals working to address illicit massage businesses and human trafficking. It provided information, research, and case-based insights to support informed, lawful, and collaborative responses to these complex issues.

Summit attendees learned about the influence of human trafficking on illicit massage businesses in the United States and efforts to address the proliferation of IMBs that now number in excess of 15,000 nationwide. The value of interagency collaboration was highlighted along with representation from victim service providers and a trauma-informed approach. The FSMTB provided context from the regulatory perspective, including gaps in regulation that are exploited. The Summit rounded out with some local case studies and the potential impact of leveraging publicly available data to inform decisions. Speakers were invited based on their experience, academic research interests, and subject-matter expertise in areas such as trafficking prevention, regulatory enforcement, and victim services.

“For over a decade, FSMTB has been listening, discussing, and evaluating the prevalence and impact of human trafficking on the massage profession,” said Dr. Debra Persinger, FSMTB Executive Director. “Our focus within this topic is educating and facilitating collaboration so that those coming into contact with this issue can respond appropriately, effectively, and with victim-centered approaches.”

#### **About FSMTB**

*Established in 2005, the Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB) is an autonomous, 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization comprised of state boards and agencies that regulate the massage therapy profession. The mission of FSMTB is to support its Member Boards in their work to ensure that the practice of massage therapy is provided to the public safely and competently. For more information, please visit [fsmtb.org](https://www.fsmtb.org)*