

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mercedes Clemens, NCTMB, CMT, EBW
June 10, 2008

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Maryland Massage Therapist Files Lawsuit Challenging Veterinary Cartel

Arlington, Va.—In Maryland, the politically powerful veterinary cartel is using government power to quash even the most harmless of entrepreneurial enterprises. But today, one entrepreneur is fighting back.

Maryland massage therapist Mercedes Clemens filed suit today in Montgomery County Circuit Court in Rockville to strike down an unconstitutional law permitting only government-licensed veterinarians to work in animal massage, a growing trade that can alleviate physical discomfort as well as calms animals, especially horses, improving their temperament, and making them easier to handle. Clemens is represented by the [Institute for Justice](#) (IJ), a public interest law firm that litigates nationwide to protect the constitutional rights of individuals.

"Nobody would suggest that the state could require massage therapists who work on people to have a medical degree before practicing their craft," said IJ Senior Attorney Scott Bullock. "Requiring massage therapists who work on animals to become veterinarians is equally if not more absurd. Massaging a horse is a skill that requires some hands-on training and common sense around large animals—but not four years of veterinary school at a cost of \$150,000."

Mercedes Clemens is a Maryland entrepreneur with a thriving massage practice in Rockville that, until recently, offered both human and animal massage. In addition to being a licensed massage therapist for people, Mercedes has more than 30 years of practical experience as a horse owner and rider, has been privately certified in equine massage, and has even taught animal massage to others.

Despite these qualifications, the Maryland State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners teamed up with the Maryland Board of Chiropractic Examiners to threaten Mercedes with criminal sanctions and the loss of her license to massage people unless she stops practicing animal massage and takes down the parts of her website offering the

service.

"All I want to do is practice in a field that I have studied and love," said Clemens. "The boards' actions are a lose-lose-lose for entrepreneurs, horse owners and horses. It puts those with the experience and skill to care for horses out of work, while forcing Maryland horse owners to pay more for lower quality care."

IJ Staff Attorney Paul Sherman said, "Mercedes has found herself threatened by two licensing boards intent on protecting a cartel of veterinarians by shutting down entrepreneurs like her who have the know-how to care for horses and other animals. Excluding her from the animal massage industry has absolutely nothing to do with consumer or animal safety and everything to do with protecting the financial interests of the veterinary cartel."

In a similar case, the Institute for Justice successfully represented Maryland funeral home owners who filed suit to open their industry. In October, a federal judge struck down as unconstitutional a protectionist Maryland law, finding that states cannot create laws to benefit in-state special interests, describing the Maryland law as "the most blatantly anti-competitive state funeral regulation in the nation."

Founded in 1991, the Virginia-based Institute for Justice has represented entrepreneurs nationwide who successfully fought arbitrary and unnecessary regulations. These cases include the landmark legal battle to open the interstate shipment of wine in which the U.S. Supreme Court struck down discriminatory state shipping laws that hampered small wineries as well as their consumers. IJ also secured the first federal appeals court victory for economic liberty since the New Deal, this on behalf of casket retailers in Tennessee.

[Read more at the Institute for Justice website!](#)

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- ***SUBSCRIBE to Animal Massage/Bodywork News by clicking [here](#).***
 - ***Bookmark Mercedes' animal/equine massage information website at <http://thebetteranimal.com>***
 - ***Bookmark the Institute for Justice website at <http://ij.org>.***
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HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- ***Spread the word -- [forward](#) this press release to anyone you know who might be interested.***
- ***Support the non-profit Institute for Justice by making a [tax-deductible donation](#) today. The folks at IJ are fighting continually for individual rights. They accept NO government funding and rely on donations. This case would not be possible without their expertise, support, vision, and commitment. Even a \$5 donation will make a difference!***
- ***Shop online and support the Institute for Justice at the same time for no additional cost. Shop over 680 merchants such as Barnes & Noble, CDNow, and Lands' End through [iGive.com](#) and up to 26% of each online purchase will go to support IJ's efforts to preserve liberty. For more information, click [here](#).***
- ***Marylanders -- contact your representatives and voice your opinion about this issue. You can find out***

who your representatives are & how to contact them by going to <http://mdelect.net/>. If you live in another state where animal massage (or other complementary health care) is veterinarian-only, I urge you to contact your representatives and make your views known.

- *Write to the MD State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners and to the MD Board of Chiropractic Examiners. Click [here](#) for contact information.*

Thank you!

Mercedes Clemens, NCTMB, CMT, EBW

301-216-2612

mercedes@probodyworker.com

TheBetterAnimal.com (information on animal massage in Maryland)

Probodyworker.com (human massage in Rockville, Maryland)