Yoga Alliance's Official Stance on Government Regulation

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In the wake of recent legislation threatening yoga instruction in many states, Yoga Alliance® has a need to educate our members and the greater yoga community about the threat that government regulation poses to our beloved practice.

There are two major regulatory issues facing the yoga community: government licensing regulations and post-secondary education and vocational training regulations.

Yoga teachers, schools and studios, when providing services to customers and operating business, are subject to government regulation. Yoga Alliance neither opposes these business regulations, nor believes the yoga community should be exempt from these business, tax and consumer protection laws.

Yoga Alliance does oppose, however, government regulation specifically targeting the practice or instruction of yoga.

Current business practice laws, such as those against false advertising, transaction fraud and unsafe premises, offer necessary consumer protection. On the other hand, government regulation on yoga practice and instruction, including teacher training programs, would simply serve no benefit to the public or yoga community.

For more detail, read our full statement on government regulation.

Licensure

We believe the licensure of yoga is unnecessary because:

- **Yoga is a safe activity.** Some forms of yoga practice and study, such as meditation, breath work and the discussion of yogic philosophy, involve little or no physical activity. As with other physical activities and sports, in the physical yoga practice, there is always risk of injury regardless of experience level; the government does not regulate training and instruction for those other activities, such as personal training, so yoga instruction should be no exception.
- **Yoga is so diverse that government licensure would inevitably reduce consumer choice.** Yoga Alliance Registry offers voluntary Standards for teachers and schools to uphold as well as provides a resource for consumers to make informed choices in their yoga journey.. Conversely, government regulations would restrict a free market by criminalizing unlicensed yoga schools and teachers, preventing them from offering services to the public, and stifle a diverse and centuries-old practice.
- **Government authorities are not qualified to develop licensure requirements for yoga.** Governmental regulatory authorities are not experts on yoga practice, theory, history, or spiritual philosophy. Regulators are therefore not qualified to develop safe or relevant licensure requirements reflecting the diversity of yoga or the needs of the yoga community.
- **Government regulation may deter those in the yoga community from operating yoga-related businesses or becoming yoga teachers, or may compel existing businesses or teachers to stop offering instruction.** The vast majority of yoga studios and yoga teacher training schools are small operations with tight budgets and limited revenues; most yoga teachers do not even earn a livable income from teaching. Because of government regulation, licensing fees, taxes, legal counsel and potential fines are very real risk factors that yoga businesses are facing now, costing teachers and studios their precious time and money.

Post-Secondary Education/Vocational Training Regulations

Some states already have regulations on the books purporting to regulate yoga teacher training schools ("YTTs") as vocational or post-secondary institutions. Although the specifics of each jurisdiction's regulatory scheme vary, they share a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of yoga schools.

We believe that YTTs fall outside the Department of Education's purview and should be exempt from state regulation of post-secondary schools because:

- **YTTs do not set general educational requirements for admission.** Unlike colleges and other post-secondary educational institutions, YTTs do not require a high school diploma or GED as a precursor to admission.
- **YTTs do not meet the statutory definition of "postsecondary vocational institutions."** Unlike colleges and most post-secondary schools, YTTs are not nationally accredited ; therefore, registration with Yoga Alliance Registry does not count as an accreditation. In addition, YTT trainees typically do not qualify to receive federally-funded Title IV loans because a YTT does not meet the definition of an "institution of higher education," a "proprietary institution of higher education," or a "postsecondary vocational institution."
- **YTTs are not vocational schools because they are not designed to prepare trainees for or lead to gainful employment.** Vocational schools provide job-specific training programs that serve as a gateway to a profession, trade, or vocation. Vocational schools offer students certificates attesting to their training for a number of trades ranging from bartender to mechanic. Yoga Teacher Trainings, by contrast, serve a broader purpose; statistically, most YTT trainees enroll for personal development, not to begin or further a career path.
- **Teaching yoga is not the primary income source or vocation for most YTT trainees.** Of the trainees who register with Yoga Alliance as Registered Yoga Teachers (RYT®s), only a fraction teach yoga full-time while most hold other careers. The small percentage of YTT trainees who go on to teach typically teach part-time or less frequently, not relying on it for their primary income. The YTT trainees who dive head-first into a full-time yoga career, such as owning a studio, constitute a minority and are not representative of the YTT trainee population.
- **Most YTTs do not operate like vocational schools.** Programs of many YTTs are irregularly scheduled; some YTTs are based in yoga studios, others offer classes in the instructors' homes, some even have no fixed location! No two YTT programs look alike, with many having a focus or theme to the training to allow the trainee to find a more personalized program. All YTTs registered with Yoga Alliance are required to cover specific curricular elements, which provide a framework for comprehensive teaching. Government attempts to treat YTTs as vocational schools, therefore, miscomprehend the nature of YTTs and impose unnecessary and inappropriate burdens on YTT programs.