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Ohio's 25th Senate District

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Senate Transportation, Commerce, and Workforce Committee
Senator Kenny Yuko and Senator Andrew O. Brenner
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Senate Bill 238 – Sponsor Testimony

Good morning Chairman McColley, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee. Thank you for allowing Senator Brenner and myself to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 238, which will create a state-wide licensure program for art and music therapists.

For those who are unfamiliar with the fields of art and music therapy, it is the clinical and evidence-based use of art and music interventions to accomplish individualized health goals. Music and art therapy have been successfully used to benefit individuals with mental health challenges, developmental and learning disabilities, Alzheimer's disease, brain injuries, and chronic pain, among many others. One of the most publicly recognized applications of music therapy in recent years was in the rehabilitation of then Congresswoman Gabby Giffords of Arizona, which assisted in helping her relearn how to speak. Here in the Senate, we heard a therapy choir from Ohio Health sing during our November Session in honor of Veterans Day. I have witnessed how music therapy can assist someone with multiple sclerosis regain mobility, coordination, and the ability to walk.

Ohio has some of the most successful music and art therapy programs in the country at such institutions all over the state, including Baldwin Wallace University, Capital University, Cleveland State University, Ohio University, University of Dayton, and Ursuline College. In addition, some of our state's best hospitals serve as centers for internships in these fields of study, including University Hospitals, Cleveland Clinic, Nationwide Children's Hospital, and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.

I became aware of art therapy in 2017 when I toured Ventures Academy in Delaware County. They provide an alternative education program for students in need of social, emotional, and behavioral interventions. On this tour I was able to see first-hand the positive effect that art therapy had on the students. Students who were closed off from others or had difficulty in their academic studies became more open and engaged with their fellow students and instructors. Additionally, I was able to interact with the instructors, some of whom were art therapists, and discuss their profession and their desire for a licensure process.

Licensure of art therapists and music therapists would expand access to therapy services for individuals of all ages and ailments by providing the potential for more avenues of service delivery. It would also protect consumers from unqualified or unethical practitioners, while setting standards of practice and ethics. By creating a licensure process, we can affirm art and music therapy's efficacy, value, and recognition among other allied health professionals. To protect our fellow Ohioans and enable them to access the most appropriate and practical treatment, we hope you will join us in supporting this legislation, and supporting our art therapists and music therapists here in Ohio.

Chairman McColley and members of the Committee, we appreciate your attention and consideration of this legislation. Senator Yuko and I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.