

PROVIDERS FOR HEALTHY LIVING

Child, Adolescent, and Adult Psychiatry & Therapy Services

phone & fax **614-664-3595**

Senate Bill 238

(03/13/2020)

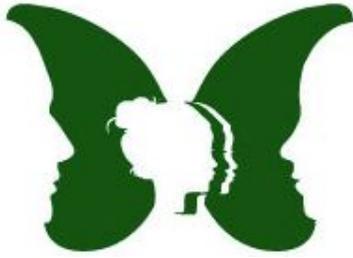
Dear Chairman McColley and the members of the Transportation, Commerce, and Workforce Committee,

Please accept this letter in support of Senate Bill 238, Art Therapy Licensure

My name is Amanda Birch and I am a Board Certified Art Therapist and a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor. I currently work in a private practice setting at Providers for Healthy Living in Columbus, OH. I have been working in the mental health field as an Art Therapist for 6.5 years. I have previously worked in school and home based services at UMCH in Columbus, OH and in community mental health for L&P Services, Inc. in Marietta, OH.

As an Art Therapist I have found that Art Therapy can often reach clients, patients, and consumers who struggle with traditional talk therapy. This has included those who are non-verbal, have speech disorders, have severe social anxiety, have experienced trauma (including veterans), are visual and/or hands on learners, those with cognitive disabilities, or individuals who connect strongly with a creative process. In my career, I've often had clients referred to me from my fellow talk therapy clinicians when they are struggling to connect with someone who may have these experiences. I have received feedback from co-workers that it is beneficial to have Art Therapists on staff to provide a different service to our clients.

I have worked with a number of clients who struggled with speech and language for various reasons and Art Therapy allowed them to feel empowered and to connect and communicate more with me and their families. I have worked with clients that struggled with talk therapy due to social anxiety. Through Art Therapy these clients were able to process their experience and express themselves without the need for



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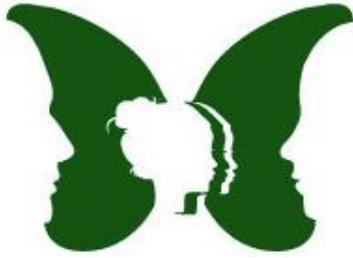
verbalization and/or were able to feel more comfortable talking about their art piece that represented themselves, thus increasing their practice of verbal communication.

I have had clients that were so anxious that they needed to be able to do something hands-on in session to alleviate their physical symptoms of stress and Art Therapy allowed for that release. One client noted to me that their biggest barrier to therapy was intellectualizing and noted they sought out Art Therapy specifically to override this. The client noted they couldn't hide behind words when they were engaging in Art Therapy and it provided a space to address their physical reactions to stress. Trauma treatment also relates to this as trauma lives in the body and Art Therapy allows clients to work through that trauma via sensory regulation and by processing the images of intrusive memories and nightmares through the art-making process and the therapeutic relationship with the Art Therapist.

Were it not for my dual Master's degree and my license in counseling, my options for work as an Art Therapist would be significantly limited. Licensure is a necessary step to being credentialed under insurances. If Art Therapists are licensed, we can work towards that credentialing. This will make Art Therapists more desirable to employers because they can bill Art Therapy services to insurance providers. This allows clients in need to have more accessible options to Art Therapy treatment.

Title Protection provided by licensure would ensure clients are receiving ethical and competent services only from appropriate professionals. This benefits the public by guaranteeing consistent understanding of the services Art Therapists provide. I have had clients who reported that they worked with clinicians who misrepresented themselves or their services as Art Therapists or Art Therapy. Poor past experiences have left these individuals closed off to the idea of engaging in potentially helpful services from an Art Therapist who has the appropriate education.

Licensure of Art Therapists could benefit the state of Ohio by increasing job opportunities and providing more avenues for Art Therapists to practice within the state. This could encourage Art Therapists from other states to move to Ohio and allow those currently residing in Ohio more opportunity to work in their field. Additionally with licensure, the public would be better informed of the career opportunities in Art Therapy and that it is a stable career. This could entice more of the public to seek out this field to meet the growing needs of Ohioans. Many people do not know that Art Therapy is a career field they could pursue or do not pursue it because without licensure it can feel uncertain whether someone with a sole Art Therapy degree will find sustainable work. All of this is despite the fact that Art Therapists are highly qualified, Master's Degree level professionals.



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Thank you for taking the time to read this. I would be happy to speak to anyone who would like more information from me, has more questions about Art Therapy or would like to tour my work space which is not far from downtown Columbus, OH. Please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

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