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Senate Bill 238

3-2-2020

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

Please accept this letter in support of Senate Bill 238.

I have worked in the art therapy field since 1986. My first job was at a neuropsychiatric hospital where I worked for the adjunctive therapies department providing art therapy services for children and adults who suffered from psychiatric disorders. Art therapy in many established entities is still not considered to be its own entity but is often lumped in with activities or adjunctive therapies. I have also worked in private practice under the license of a psychologist, in a children's' rehabilitation hospital under activities, and now in oncology for The Cleveland Clinic Foundation where art therapy is respected as its own entity but not capable of being billed as such. I have seen firsthand the benefits of art therapy with my patients in terms of physical healing, emotional healing, and spiritual healing. I have recently experienced the benefits of art therapy myself as I process the sudden death of my husband using art therapy as a tool for healing and growth.

Licensure for art therapy will assist hundreds of patients to safely receive treatment for various issues related to life altering events including cancer, mental health issues, addictions, Alzheimer's, learning disabilities, sex trafficking, domestic violence, P.T.S.D., and many other traumas. Hospitals, community agencies, private health services, and non-profit entities will have the option of billing for art therapy services thereby increasing services for many underserved in our communities.

Licensure will ensure that those who need art therapy will receive it from a qualified licensed professional. I have had the unfortunate experience of learning that other persons who do not hold a degree in art therapy have provided "art therapy" to patients with damaging and harmful results. Although these persons may be well meaning, they are not equipped to offer art interventions with the use of media that is counter therapeutic while pressuring a patient who is not yet equipped to utilize the media in a safe and therapeutic manner. Art therapists are trained for years in the use and potential side effects of various media. A person who uses art for recreational or craft purposes is neither trained nor knowledgeable about complications that may arise when offering media that could be detrimental to a client's healing. Licensure would insure that people who are referred to art therapy services will be able to easily find a qualified and educationally sound art therapist who has graduated from a licensed school of art therapy and passed the exam that would qualify them as a practicing art therapist.

In conclusion, I urge you to vote for Senate Bill 238 and provide much needed protection for children and adults who seek art therapy. By allowing community health agencies to bill for art therapy services, our most vulnerable citizens will benefit in a multitude of ways. Ohio will add hundreds of qualified and especially skilled mental health practitioners to assist overburdened mental health workers in the growing epidemic of mental health crises in Ohio.

Thank you for your consideration,

Dawn Freeman, MAT

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