

Testimony on Behalf of Music Therapy Licensure

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Chairman McColley and Members of the Transportation, Commerce, and Workforce Committee,

My name is Dr. Lisa Gallagher, and I thank you for allowing me to speak to you today in favor of SB238. It is my great honor and privilege to be here today and to come before you as a board certified music therapist, researcher at the Cleveland Clinic, music therapy educator, and a recipient of music therapy services.

According to the American Music Therapy Association (2005), music therapy is the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program. Benefits of music therapy include improved physical, mental, emotional, cognitive, social, and spiritual health and well-being.

Licensure is needed by music therapists in Ohio for several reasons such as increased client access, job creation, stability, title protection, and to best meet the needs of our clients.

The lack of state licensure for music therapists is severely limiting Ohioans access to music therapy in several ways. First, some agencies who would like to hire music therapists, and music therapists who would like to work for these agencies, are unable to pursue employer-employee relationships because only state licensed professionals can fill these positions. This limits the hiring and service opportunities of the agencies, and it limits the ability of music therapists to progress in their careers. Licensure would also allow them to meet the requirements of treatment facilities and their accrediting organizations.

Second, many agencies and funding sources, including some third party reimbursement entities, would like to be able to have their funds used for non-pharmaceutical interventions such as music therapy, but again, due to the lack of state licensure for music therapists, many regulations and policies prohibit them from doing so.

Third, and most importantly, the lack of state licensure for music therapy is severely limiting access of Ohioans to this non-pharmaceutical evidence-based intervention provided by trained and credentialed music therapists. When the agencies and funding sources for education, health and wellness services are unable to offer music therapy, Ohioans are not able to access music and an option for their care.

Through my experiences as a board certified music therapist I have seen individuals post-stroke regain some speech through singing; patients with multiple sclerosis improve their gait and ability to walk through music therapy techniques such as rhythmic auditory stimulation; pain decrease from an 8 out of 10 to 0 after a 25 minute music therapy session; a child with intellectual disabilities learn to follow directions and make eye contact during singing and instrument playing; an addict implement music-assisted relaxation techniques instead of using drugs; and an adult with stage four ovarian cancer and a bowel obstruction (who happened to be my mother) cope with her terminal illness and end of life issues a month before her death as she engaged in music therapy sessions with her family.

It is also extremely important that quality be ensured and that only qualified individuals would be eligible to call themselves music therapists and provide services. This would provide protection for Ohioans/your constituents against misrepresentation and harm that could be done by individuals who call themselves music therapists but have never received the training, graduated with the degree, and passed the national board certification exam. Although many assume that music could never be harmful, without the proper training it could be. Allow me to share one quick example from my time as a clinical music therapist in the hospital setting. A patient, with whom I had an excellent rapport and had seen several times, asked me to play some happy music by Frank Sinatra. I tried to get her to choose a specific song, but she declined to do so. I started playing *Love and Marriage*, and after a few lines of the song she became visibly angry and loudly told me to stop and get out of her room. Because I had a good relationship with her, and I had the counseling skills to do so, I said that I would leave if she wanted me to, but first would she tell me what had just happened. She said that that was her song with her husband and that day was the anniversary of their divorce. She allowed me to stay, we were able to process the emotions that she was experiencing, a catharsis occurred, and by the end of the session she said that she felt better. If this had happened to someone other than a board certified music therapist, they would probably have left the room, leaving the patient in great distress, which could have increased her emotional and physical pain. Unfortunately, there are examples of harm that have been done by individuals saying they are music therapists when they are not.

Music therapists are very flexible and adaptable individuals. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, it was necessary for music therapists to find new and creative ways to meet the needs of their clients and patients, all while providing best practices regarding safety precautions. In some settings this has included the donning of PPE (face masks and shields), washing hands, and cleaning and sanitizing all instruments and equipment taken into patient or client rooms. For music therapists in other settings, it has included telehealth visits via iPad or computer, socially distanced visits outside, or visits through a patient's window with the music therapist properly masked on the outside of the building.

Providing licensure to music therapists in Ohio would not be an added expense to the State. We already have our own exam, which is overseen by the Certification Board for Music Therapists, so we would not need a new exam. We are also not asking for a new board to be created, as we would like to be placed under the State Medical Board. As you know, both of these items are included in SB238.

This is CRITICAL right now, as so many Ohioans are facing significant mental health, addiction, quality of life and bereavement needs due to the impact of COVID-19 on our state and around the world. As we all work together to come out on the other side of this pandemic, we need, and will continue to need, all "hands on deck" to provide Ohioans as much support, particularly in cost-effective and non-pharmaceutical interventions, as possible. We are asking you to help music therapists and art therapists be able to help as many Ohioans as we possibly can by voting yes on SB238. Ohioans need every research supported and beneficial non-pharmaceutical option available and SB238 will be a part of helping Ohio to meet this goal.

Thank you for your time and consideration of licensure for board certified music therapists in Ohio.