

Sponsor Testimony
HB 557 Art Therapy Licensure
Provided by Representative Marlene Anielski
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Good morning, Chair Huffman, Vice-Chair Gavarone and Ranking Member Antonio and the members of the House Health Committee for the opportunity to give sponsor testimony today. House Bill 557 identifies the standard of professional practice and qualifications for Art Therapists in the state, assuring the public that only licensed Art Therapists practice and provide professional healthcare. Art therapists provide efficient and effective assessment and treatment for at-risk students and individuals of all ages. Art therapists are unique from other mental health professionals because they offer an array of action-oriented treatment methods and approaches to reach the various needs of Ohio's diverse resident population. Art therapy licensure in Ohio will expand access to art therapy services for many Ohioans.

Art therapy continues to gain recognition for its success in mental health to: alleviate emotional, psychological, social, and physical aspects of pain and distress; address psychosocial factors such as improving mood; reducing feelings of anxiety and depression; and improving interpersonal dynamics. Art Therapists assess a person's response to the use of art media, images, and the creative art process to then identify their developmental needs, abilities, personality, interests, concerns, and conflicts. Within Ohio, art therapy is widely used in facilities such as drug treatment centers, medical and psychiatric hospitals, outpatient mental health facilities, hospices, homeless shelters, prisons and court ordered services, public and private schools, nursing homes, and private practice settings.

Art Therapy is particularly effective and is often the treatment of choice, for vulnerable individuals with substance abuse, veterans, and survivors of trauma and abuse. There is a multitude of benefits for art therapy with individuals who have substance addiction: motivation to change and engage in treatment, outlet for communication of thoughts and experiences too difficult to verbalize, discovery of coping skills, resolution of conflict, experience of a sense of mastery and control that may be lacking in life. Research with veterans diagnosed with PTS shows art therapy is more effective than verbal therapy; art therapy fosters cognitive and creative problem solving, increases self-esteem, and assists with overcoming avoidance. Art therapy addresses trauma and abuse through reducing symptom severity, developing coping abilities, enhancing developmental abilities, providing a non-verbal expression of abuse, increasing insight and awareness, improving family connections, and enriching quality of life and well-being.

Art Therapy has been used as a method of psychiatry throughout history, and since the 1940's it has been a distinct and independent profession within the United States. The national organization of Art Therapists known as the American Art Therapy Association (AATA) came in to existence in 1969 for the decided purpose of providing standards of professional competence and developing knowledge in the field of art therapy. The AATA organization represents nearly 5,000 members affiliated with 38 states and over 400 art therapists here in Ohio. The Art Therapy Credentials Board (ATCB) developed as a separate entity intended to nationally regulate the certification of Art Therapists and ensure

competent standards and ethical practice in 1995. The ATCB is certified by the National Commission of Certifying Agencies (NCCA). Here in Ohio, we have the Buckeye Art Therapy Association (BATA) which is a not-for-profit incorporated professional association in Ohio for art therapists, students, and individuals who support the therapeutic use of art and the advancement of the art therapy field. BATA is one of the oldest, largest and most active state art therapy associations in the country and is an affiliate chapter of the AATA. BATA is dedicated to the advancement of the practice of art therapy.

National educational standards for professional entry into the practice of art therapy requires a master's degree from a university that holds an accredited art therapy program, 1,000 hours of direct client contact providing art therapy under the supervision of a credentialed Art Therapist and three letters of recommendation. Graduate course requirements are deeply grounded in human development, psychological theory, ethics and therapeutic technique as well as the application of therapy through art. The educational requirements of many graduate programs were augmented to align with the American Counseling Association to meet the standards of a Licensed Professional Counselor to provide for dual competence in Art Therapy and counseling. At the present time, the highest Art Therapy credential (Board Certification-BC) requires successfully passing a standardized national exam, and the Art Therapy Credentials Board has an additional credential for supervision.

Under HB 557, the State of Ohio Medical Board would grant an Art Therapist license to individuals who submit the necessary application materials and meets the established requirements. States that have already passed legislation for the distinct licensure of Art Therapists include 7 states: Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Oregon. Five other states: New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, and Wisconsin offer art therapist licenses under related licensure. Three other states: Arizona, Connecticut, and Louisiana recognize art therapists in title protection. HB 557 would join those states that already recognize the need to protect the consumer and health care provider status through regulation of the title and practice of Art Therapy, as well as ensure that consumers are receiving quality Art Therapy services from properly trained professionals.

In conclusion, the practice of Art Therapy is a long-standing method of psychiatric practice that has developed into a definitive profession being practiced as its own throughout the State of Ohio. Furthermore, Art Therapists work with some of Ohio's most fragile and vulnerable students and consumers: those with drug addictions, veterans returning from war, suffering from emotional or mental health diagnoses and victims of trauma. These consumers' needs require fully trained professionals with expertise to help them navigate the most challenging times of their lives. HB 557 will define the practice of Art Therapy to those who have been licensed by the State of Ohio and it will grant use of the title of "Licensed Art Therapist" to only those who have met the state requirements. In short, HB 557 addresses health service, provides another tool to protect Ohioans, and improves mental health outcomes for those who need it most.

Thank you, Chair Huffman and members of the House Health Committee, for the opportunity to give sponsor testimony on HB 557. Art therapy licensure will expand access for all Ohioans to art therapy services. I am happy to answer any questions.