

House Bill 557  
Proponent Testimony  
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Ohio Health Committee  
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Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Minority Member Antonio, and members of the Ohio Health Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today regarding House Bill 557, which establishes licensure for Art Therapy in Ohio.

My name is Gail Rule-Hoffman and I am the director and a professor in the Counseling and Art Therapy Department at Ursuline College. Ursuline is the only Master's program for Art Therapy in Ohio, and is unique in that it offers a dual degree in Counseling and Art Therapy. My professional work as an art therapist in Ohio began over 40 years ago, and I have been an educator for the past 30 years.

My work includes experience with adults with chronic mental illness, geriatrics, incarcerated juveniles, children with severe emotional and behavioral issues, addictions and chemical dependency treatment for adults, adolescents, and family members, domestic violence work with perpetrators and children, and women whose lives have been touched by cancer. I have seen the remarkable results that Art Therapy can have in the lives of these people.

I will briefly summarize some of the issues relevant to House Bill 557, and have provided some details regarding Art Therapy education standards, client examples, and other information related to this testimony in an attached document.

***Blocks to Client Access and Art Therapy Practice in Ohio***

Ohio has historically been one of leading states for Art Therapy, due to training programs and several art therapists who were leaders in the profession. In the 1970's, about 20% of the art therapists nationwide were in Ohio and that number is now about 5%. Ohio can no longer claim to be a leader in the growing professionalism of the field as the lack of licensure has led to less accessibility for clients and numerous challenges for art therapists wanting to provide services as outlined below.

1. Ohio is not attractive to Art Therapists. Those who attend Art Therapy programs in other states and return, or those who move to Ohio from other states find that although agencies or hospitals want to hire them, they cannot be hired because they are not license eligible.

2. Agencies often cut art therapy programs because of the lack of licensure. Rape crisis centers, domestic violence centers, hospice programs, addictions agencies and others have seen cuts in their Art Therapy services to clients. Some hospitals depend on philanthropic funding which can affect the stability of the programs due to lack of reimbursement from other sources.
3. Agencies are able to hire Ursuline graduates because they have the counselor licensure. However, the Art Therapy services are under the umbrella or title of counseling which “**hides**” the nature of the Art Therapy service by calling it something else. This is a disservice to clients as it is confusing and denigrates the value of the Art Therapy.
4. Art therapists often will be required to have a licensed person co-lead groups, which is not cost effective for the agency.
5. Art therapists may be hired in roles such as caseworkers or activities therapist, which are bachelor’s level jobs, and do not provide Art Therapy services to clients.
6. Art therapists are sometimes in a position of being supervised by undergraduate licensed social workers, which does not improve the quality of Art Therapy services for clients.
7. Lack of licensure limits the number of Art Therapists providing services in private practice.
8. Colleges do not create new Art Therapy graduate programs in Ohio (Wright State’s program closed many years ago). States with licensure see more development of graduate training programs. I recently consulted with a college in Maryland that will be starting a new graduate program due to the impact of the art therapy licensure there.
9. I regularly receive calls from other professionals wanting to add Art Therapy to their skills, and I educate them on the requirements to practice Art Therapy, but there is no legislation in Ohio to support Art Therapy as a profession. Ohio law currently does not protect clients from practitioners who claim to practice Art Therapy but are not trained or credentialed.

### ***Ensuring Quality of Art Therapy Services***

Art Therapists are advocates for creativity and its ability to aid in healing, and are not trying to take away other professional’s ability to use art materials, but aim to protect the public from those not trained or credentialed as Art Therapists. The entry level for Art Therapy is a Master’s degree, and education and training standards are on par with those of other graduate level mental health professionals.

The findings from the government white paper on “*Arts, Health and Well-Being across the Military Continuum*” showed many positive outcomes from Art Therapy, but stated



that outcomes were not the same when interventions were done by professionals other than Art Therapists. (See attachment for further information or [www.ArtsAcrossTheMilitary.org](http://www.ArtsAcrossTheMilitary.org))

House Bill 557 specifically addresses this issue, and clarifies that although others use art materials, they cannot use the professional term “Art Therapy” or “Art Therapist”. (**Sec. 4785.02.**) Passing House Bill 557 will enable more clients to access the services provided by Art Therapists, and ensure that only those with the proper credentials are providing Art Therapy.

House Bill 557 will put Ohio back in the lead with other states that acknowledge the value of Art Therapy and the unique services it brings to a wide range of clients. Passing House Bill 557 will allow highly trained professional Art Therapists to come out of the shadows, to stand on equal footing with other helping professionals, and ensure the continuance of Ohio citizens choosing to study and practice Art Therapy in Ohio.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Health Committee, thank you for allowing my proponent testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions that you or the committee may have at this time and share a client example if time permits.

Respectfully Submitted,



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