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Testimony of:

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Regarding:

HB 557 Art Therapy Licensure  
May 23, 2018

Good morning, and thank you Chair Huffman, Vice-Chair Gavarone, and Ranking Member Antonio and members of the House Health Committee for having me here today to testify about art therapy licensure.

Thank you Representative Anielski, for your important support in sponsoring this bill, and to the other sponsors - Representatives Schuring, Reineke, Brenner, Antonio, Barnes, Kelly, Lepore-Hagan, Patmon, and Sweeney. If I left anyone off the list, please forgive me, I am not familiar with the details of bills and sponsors and protocols.

Although I am not that familiar with the workings of this House, I am very familiar with the work of art therapists at Cleveland Clinic, and I am delighted to be able to share with you today my experiences and impressions of art therapists, and to encourage you to grant them licensure in Ohio.

My name is Maria Jukic and I am the Executive Director of the Arts & Medicine Institute at Cleveland Clinic. I am a lawyer and administrator. In some ways, it would make more sense for me to be working with you all on this committee, here in Columbus, than to be working with the arts.

I am not an artist. I am a musician only so far as my clarinet playing through high school took me. Nor am I a doctor or nurse or art therapist or any kind of therapist. I am the lay person, administrator, who has to make sure our patients are served well, our bills are paid, and our programs grow and thrive.

When I started in this job almost exactly 10 years ago now, I knew very little about the arts, and I had never heard of art therapy. Today, I am a leading advocate for the arts in healthcare and a passionate proponent of licensure for art therapists. When the Republican National Convention was in Cleveland in 2016, I spoke on a panel about the value of the arts, especially in healthcare.

Today, I sit here to tell you that art therapists provide a service like no other; that I have great respect for their profession, their education, their skill and ethics in practice, and their credentialing board; and that I wholeheartedly support their request for licensure.

Art therapists are trained, professional therapists, with Master's Degrees, who undergo a rigorous curriculum, do thousands of hours of internships and supervision, and hone their therapy skills to a level on par with other professions who provide therapy and counseling.

What that means to me as the executive director to whom the art therapists report up; the executive director of an Institute that people don't understand and where we are always educating; as the healthcare administrator who has to consider all the legal, regulatory, patient safety, HIPAA, compliance, and other issues that are part of modern healthcare practice today; what that means to me is that I can trust them. I can trust the art therapists with the health, wellbeing, safety, and treatment of patients who are under our care. I trust them because of their degree, their skills, and their training.

I cannot say the same thing about artists or other non-art therapists who want to work with patients and do art. The profession of art therapy needs licensure to match the work that they do and the professionalism with which they work. Art therapy needs licensure to protect them and the important work they do, and to protect patients and consumers from others claiming to be art therapists.

Licensure would help the art therapists, the art therapy program, and the Arts & Medicine Institute. Although many medical and healthcare professionals have reached the same conclusion that I have reached – that art therapists are highly-skilled, highly-trained professionals who do extraordinary work in the medical setting – there are many who have not reached that conclusion due to their lack of direct experience, knowledge or observation of art therapy in action. For them, licensure for art therapists would provide a level of respect, trust, and acknowledgement of the important and often life-changing work of art therapists. Licensure would allow for greater acceptance, utilization, and access.

Let me tell you a little bit about what art therapists do at Cleveland Clinic. First of all, Cleveland Clinic is ranked the #2 hospital in the country by US News and World Report and ranked #1 in heart care since 1995. We have more than 52,000 employees, seven million outpatient visits in 2016, several national and international locations, and ten regional hospitals.

Today, art therapists at Cleveland Clinic work in the inpatient hospital bedside with cancer patients; with post-heart surgery patients; with transplant patients who are in the hospital for months at a time; with dying patients and their families; with children getting chemotherapy and with children getting heart transplants; with patients suffering from depression, mood disorders, and other psychological challenges. They work outpatient with patients suffering from multiple sclerosis, cancer, and other chronic physical and psychological conditions.

Art therapists help patients cope with their illnesses, their hospital stays, their diagnoses, and often with the prospect of disability and death. They help treat and alleviate depression, anxiety, pain, and help improve mood, functioning, and other abilities. The art therapists will often say that they help people convey their emotions through their art that they are not able to convey through words or other means.

I have seen more and more evidence of this last point through the years.

When you have lost a baby at birth, after months of hearing the heartbeat and having no expectation or forewarning of problems, how do you cope with that? One mother said the only thing she found helpful was art therapy.

When you are a young man, barely in your twenties, fighting cancer, and ultimately realizing that you were going to lose your battle, how do you cope with that? Art therapy. He was able to express some of his thoughts and feelings about an unimaginable situation through his art, and with an art therapist.

When you are a child with multiple medical issues, far from home, everyone speaking a language you don't understand, and long hospitalizations, how do you cope with that? With an art therapist and art therapy. The art therapist becomes the first person that patient wants to see. And the hospitalization becomes something to look forward to because of the art therapy.

I trust the art therapists in all these scenarios and many more. Where people are most vulnerable, I trust the art therapists.

The art therapists deserve to have the recognition, protection, and respect that licensure offers.

Licensing art therapists will not cause conflict or scope of practice issues with other disciplines. There is no discipline like art therapy. Various therapies and interventions work seamlessly at Cleveland Clinic on a daily basis and that would continue even if art therapists were licensed.

Licensing art therapists would protect patients and consumers. Licensing would allow greater access to the service because it would be recognized, protected, and respected. Licensing art therapists would acknowledge the unique role and intervention offered by art therapists. Licensing art therapists would elevate the field and allow art therapy to more fully enter the dialogue of health and wellness in our state and our country as we strive to keep people healthier and lower healthcare costs.

The benefits of licensing art therapy far outweigh any challenges, and I urge you to provide licensure for art therapists in the great State of Ohio.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I am happy to answer any questions at this time.



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