

## **SB 250**

To the Distinguished Members of the Connecticut Legislature,

I would like to offer written testimony in support of the proposed legislation on behalf of the Art Therapy Community in Connecticut. As an art therapy professional, and as an Associate Professor in the Masters of Art Therapy Program at Albertus Magnus College in New Haven, CT I believe that the matter before you is of some urgency.

As a clinician who worked with combat veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan for seven years, I have personally and professionally witnessed the power of art therapy to help heal the broken psyches of those returning from combat. Art therapy offered them another way to express their trauma besides talking about it. Most of them did not want to have to retell their shattering stories. Instead, they were able to express their narratives through art materials. We have a saying in our profession, which is this: "It always comes out in the art." This occurred repeatedly in my art therapy groups, and gave hope to these veterans that they could tell their stories in a less painful way, and find themselves understood through their visual imagery by others in the same situation.

At the National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE), a part of Walter Reed Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, an interdisciplinary care model is utilized to treat post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury. This care model uses the services of an art therapist as part of the clinical treatment team. Evidence of its efficacy can be found in the February 2015 National Geographic, which includes testimony from veterans who participated in a mask making program. These veterans found that they were able to articulate some of their combat experiences, and their problems in reintegrating back to the US through this unique art therapy approach. A number of research studies point to the efficacy of clinical art therapy as an effective modality for veterans. In another research study investigating the use of art therapy for treating the nightmares associated with post traumatic stress disorder in a veteran population, art therapy was found to be an effective modality. The details are included in this link: Morgan, C.A. & Johnson, D.R. (1995). Use of a drawing task in the treatment of nightmares in combat related Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 12(4), 244-247. Art therapy is widely used at the VA Facility in West Haven, CT, through the Giant Steps Program, which treats veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse issues, and chronic mental illness. For the past fifteen years, many of my graduate students have been trained at the VA CT Healthcare System in West Haven, and have graduated with the skills that enable them to work very effectively with the veteran population. The mental health issues of our veteran population have become a national crisis, and one which art therapists are well equipped to engage with.

As an educator in a graduate program, I can assure you that after sixty credits of graduate studies, my students are well equipped to enter the field of clinical work through the blending of intensive course work in psychology and in the theory and practice of art therapy. These graduate students also must complete 725 hours of clinical training in hospitals, clinics, and treatment centers in the State of Connecticut, in which they are closely supervised by an art therapy professional.

I believe that art therapy professionals are uniquely trained and poised to offer highly skilled and unique services to clients of all ages, from very young children to the geriatric population. Art therapy offers unique avenues of connection for those who are most in need of services.

Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

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