

Please listen!

I am a very skilled LCAT, ATR-BC, with a BFA from Parson's School of Design, a professional artist, and resident of Newtown, CT.

Because of the fact that the LCAT was not recognized in CT, not only was I not allowed to help during Newtown's tragedy, but am also forced to work and pay my taxes in New York! I cannot even practice or help clients in CT!

Please remedy this horrible oversight and unreasonable, uninformed situation. The only people you are hurting are Connecticut residents, which includes patients in dire need of Creative Arts Therapies, and the residents who are legitimately credentialed, and only want to be able to assist their communities, in all aspects and levels of care.

You may contact me for any further comments or information. I will not be able to appear at the hearing because the lack of LCAT licensure in CT forces me to travel great distances to enable me to assist patients in New York. I work at a non-profit adolescent residential treatment facility for children with psychiatric, behavioral, Developmentally Intellectual Disabilities that suffer from severe trauma and PTSD due to excessive abuse, physical and sexual, and neglect.

I am able to connect with them because of my expertise with the population, and in particular, because of their intellectual disabilities, art is sometimes the only way that they can express themselves and be heard.

Thank you, and please do make this bill pass.

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Why the Art Therapist License is critical to the practice of Art Therapy and my career as a Licensed, Registered and Board Certified Art Therapist.

Art therapy is a distinct mental health profession in which clients, facilitated by the Art Therapist, use art media, the creative process, and the resulting artwork to explore their feelings, reconcile emotional conflicts, foster self-awareness, manage behavior and addictions, develop social skills, improve reality orientation, reduce anxiety, and increase self-esteem. Art therapy practice requires knowledge of visual art (drawing, painting, sculpture, and other art forms) and the creative process, as well as of human development, psychological, and counseling theories and techniques.

Educational requirements include theories of art therapy, counseling, and psychotherapy; ethics and standards of practice; assessment and evaluation; individual, group, and family art therapy techniques; human and creative

development; multicultural issues; research methods; and internship experiences in clinical, community, and/or other settings.

Because of the uniqueness of the study and practice of art therapy, practitioners must be trained within an approved and accredited art therapy master's program recognized by the American Art Therapy Association. Therefore training for the profession is conducted by educational institutions accredited by the Council of Higher Education Accreditation with Art Therapy master's programs approved by the Educational Program Approval Board of the American Art Therapy Association.

Potential Harm from Untrained Practice of Art Therapy.

The license serves to protect the public from potential harm that may be caused when a non-qualified person promotes himself/herself as a qualified practitioner. Art Therapy recognizes the power of art and art-making to stimulate memories and reveal emotions. Understanding how art interacts with a client's psychological disposition, and how to safely manage and interpret the reactions different art processes may evoke, are competencies that must be gained through substantial experiential learning that is unique to art therapy training. The use of art as therapy thus carries risk of harm if applied beyond the competence of the practitioner. Individuals using art therapy methods and art materials in their mental health practice without appropriate or adequate academic and clinical training pose significant risk to the emotional stability of their clients. Potential risks include misinterpreting or ignoring assessments that they have not been clinically trained to diagnose or treat, or eliciting adverse responses from clients that they are not properly trained to safely manage.

Profession growth through licensure:

To practice throughout the United States in other leading mental health professions such as marriage and family therapy, counseling, and social work, a state license is a requirement. The license ensures that the person receiving services has achieved the professional level of care required in state law and regulation. It also qualifies licensed providers for insurance reimbursement for both government and private insurance. Each existing mental health practitioner license outlines the specific requirements for practice, which apply uniquely to each profession.

In addition, it would help ensure that the "LCAT" licensure status continues to be a recognizable and legally accepted credential throughout the United States. Significantly, as each state continues to acknowledge, respect, and allow properly trained Art Therapists to practice Art Therapy and Psychotherapy with their Master of Science in Art Therapy and Counseling in nationally accredited programs to

practice their expertise without needing further unnecessary licensing, such as a LPC. An LPC is a step removed from the practice of Art Therapy, and does not ensure that a practitioner is qualified to provide therapeutic services in that realm.

There is not one “mental health practitioner” license for the entire mental health field. Each profession requires its own distinct training and pertinent scope of practice and its own license. Likewise, it is not appropriate for someone to practice marriage and family therapy or art therapy, for example, unless specifically trained to do so through a minimum of a master’s degree program.

The license for the art therapy profession should be recognized throughout the United States as its own licensed profession, without necessitating an additional license such as an LPC to practice.

It is a scientifically and quantitatively proven therapy with more efficacy than most other therapeutic methods, and should be as well respected in the state of Connecticut, as it is in other forward thinking states.

In lieu of the availability of the art therapist license, some art therapy master’s graduates have sought to become licensed in related mental health fields. At the same time the approved art therapy master’s programs have increased their study requirements to include areas of study that would enable graduates to qualify for licenses in other professions. These measures only serve as an obstacle to the acceptance of the professional expertise of qualified art therapists. Other therapeutic solutions quickly lose their efficacy as other mental health professions continue to define or re-evaluate their educational or practice standards and related exams and experience required.

Licensure law in many states is increasingly requiring those qualified for the license to be trained through a program accredited through a CHEA recognized accrediting body such as a CACREP approved program, or the Commission on Accreditation Marriage & Family Therapy Education approved master’s programs.

Without question other professions have and will continue to define and fine tune their professional requirements and educational standards to conform to their own national standards and changes in the profession. Those professions may expand educational, practice and other requirements in the future based on the demands and expectations of their unique profession and without regard to those with art therapy training who may hold a license in that profession currently.

The institutions providing training in those fields will also modify or expand training in the profession as the specific mental health profession changes to meet new demands and within an era of increasing knowledge about scientifically and medically supported theories with regard to increases in brain functioning and psychological well being.

In summary, to remain a viable profession the art therapy profession must have its own license to:

- ☐ Protect the public and ensure those in need of services receive services from qualified professional art therapists.
- ☐ Ensure quality of art therapy services by a specifically trained and experienced provider,
- ☐ Provide a distinct service and reimbursement code under public and private insurance for which art therapists are qualified.
- ☐ Enable art therapists to provide their distinct services within state law.
- ☐ Be recognized as an important, unique mental health profession.

Today art therapy is practiced in a wide variety of settings including hospitals, psychiatric

and rehabilitation facilities, wellness centers, forensic institutions, schools, crisis centers,

senior communities, private practice, and other clinical and community settings. But often

the practice is under a subcontracted license group for insurance reimbursement for

example or the practitioners holds a license from a related field which may not include art

therapy services in the scope of practice included in licensure law.

In states including Maryland, Mississippi, Kentucky, New Mexico, New Jersey and others, a

trained and qualified art therapist can practice art therapy as a licensed professional. All

other states must now gain that same status for the future of the profession.

Let's make Connecticut the next state to promote consumer safety through regulated art

psychotherapy services and providers.