

TESTIMONY ON RAISED SENATE BILL No. 354

To Co-Chairpersons of the Public Health, Senator Gerratana and Representative Ritter, and to the esteemed members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Heather Wagner. I am a board-certified music therapist and have been in practice for 18 years. I currently serve as Immediate Past-President for the New England Region of the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA), and on the Judicial Review Board for the AMTA. In 2014 I completed my Ph.D. in music therapy. In addition to my clinical work and research practice, I am an adjunct professor for several universities in the Northeast.

I am speaking today in support of RSB 354 on behalf of the clients with whom my colleagues and I work throughout the state of Connecticut. This bill will create a license for music therapists, thereby increasing access to quality music therapy services, while also providing client and consumer protections.

As a music therapy educator, an academic practicum supervisor, and a former clinical training director and supervisor I am very well-acquainted with the education and training of music therapists at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

To become eligible to become a board-certified music therapist, students must complete a degree at an academic program accredited by the AMTA. The baccalaureate or equivalency curriculum is designed to impart entry-level competencies in three main areas: Musical Foundations, Clinical Foundations, and Music Therapy Foundations and principles as specified by the AMTA Professional Competencies. This degree includes courses in music therapy, music theory, music history, anatomy and physiology, psychology, biology, and education. In addition to academic coursework, each student is required to complete clinical practicum and extended internship requirements in an approved mental health, special education, or health care facility. Through these hands-on clinical experiences, students learn to assess the needs of clients, develop and implement treatment plans, and evaluate and document clinical changes.

Upon successfully completing academic and clinical training, and subsequently passing the national examination administered by the independent Certification Board for Music Therapists, the graduate acquires the credential, Music Therapist – Board Certified (MT-BC).

Graduate programs in music therapy examine, with greater breadth and depth, issues relevant to the clinical, professional, and academic preparation of music therapists, usually in combination with established methods of research inquiry. Selected universities offer doctoral study in music therapy, some of which include coursework in music therapy in combination with doctoral study in related areas.

At all levels of education, students learn how to carry out research as well as how to apply this research to clinical practice. Music therapists are trained in both quantitative

and qualitative research methods, and publish in a variety of professional journals, including two peer-reviewed journals published by the AMTA. Currently, there is a strategic priority on research being developed and implemented by the AMTA. One impetus of this initiative is to continue to support evidence-based music therapy that will advance clinical practice, thereby providing more effective treatment for the clients whom we serve.

On behalf of my colleagues here and around the state who are providing music therapy services, I urge you support PSB 354, An Act Concerning Music and Art Therapy.

Heather J. Wagner, PhD, MT-BC
203 Circlewood Drive
Berlin, CT 06037
heatherwagner.mtbc@gmail.com
860-550-4884