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Proposed S.B. No. 354 AN ACT CONCERNING ART THERAPY.

Good Afternoon Connecticut General Assembly Members,

My name is Lisa Donohue-Olivieri and I am an Art Therapist working at the Resiliency Center of Newtown (RCN) , which was established in response to the shooting that took place at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012.

I am writing in support of Bill SB 354 with the adjustments made by the Art Therapy board. This bill would be of significant service to the residents of Connecticut by ensuring that all individuals providing Art Therapy have demonstrated a base level of therapeutic competence. At present, the state of Connecticut does not have established guidelines surrounding the practice of Art Therapy. By creating a license for qualified and competent Art Therapists, the public will be protected from individuals claiming to practice Art Therapy despite having little to no training.

Art Therapy is a mental health profession that helps clients express and process challenging emotional material, improve self esteem, and enhance social and communication skills. The American Art Therapy Association (AATA) and the Art Therapy Credentials Board (ATBC) have created guidelines pertaining to the training and practice of Art Therapists. These guidelines, although not widely recognized outside of the Art Therapy community, serve to protect the public. In order to become professional practitioners of Art Therapy, individuals must complete an approved art therapy master's degree program. Upon earning one's Master's degree, Art Therapists are encouraged to pursue additional credentials including the ATR (Art Therapist, Registered) and the ATR-BC (Art Therapist, Register and Board Certified). In order to earn the ATR credential, one must complete 1000 hours engaging in Art Therapy directly with clients as well as 100 hours of Supervision with a qualified Supervisor. Once an Art Therapist has obtained his or her ATR, he or she can take the Board Certification exam to obtain the ATR-BC credential. These credentials serve to protect the public by ensuring that practicing Art Therapists have demonstrated a strong level of knowledge, therapeutic skill and competence.

At the Resiliency Center of Newtown, I utilize the creative process to assist individuals with symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder as well as anxiety and depression. My training and experience allows me to be of service to individuals experiencing challenges such as these as well as clients potentially exhibiting suicidal or homicidal thoughts, individuals experiencing psychosis, individuals experiencing abuse, neglect or family violence, and and/or individuals struggling with substance abuse. Without my training, there would be immense potential for harm.

Please strongly consider supporting SB 354. In addition to protecting the public, SB 354 serves to create another option for people seeking mental health services.

Sincerely,
Lisa Donohue-Olivieri, MA, LPC, LADC, LCAT
Licensed Professional Counselor
Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor
Licensed Creative Arts Therapist
Board Certified Art Therapist