

Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5444

Title: AN ACT REQUIRING LICENSURE OF ART THERAPISTS.

Vote Date: 3/1/2019

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/11/2019

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Public Health Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill would require art therapists be licensed by the Department of Public Health (DPH). Licensure would require a graduate degree and certification by the Art Therapy Credentials Board. The bill also provides exemptions from these licensure requirements for other licensed providers that use art in their scope of practice. Currently, Connecticut law makes it a crime for someone to represent themselves as an art therapist without proper credentials.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Raul Pino, M.D, Commssioner of the Department of Public Health (DPH): Following a request submitted by the CT Art Therapy Association (CATA), the DPH convened a scope of practice review committee that included representatives from CATA, the CT Occupational Therapy Association and the CT Hospital Association. Although the committee did not oppose the expansion of state regulation to include the licensing of art therapists, it did not support language that would restrict the term “art therapy” to only art therapists alone since other licensed professionals use similar modalities in their practices. The DPH also noted that the Department would be unable to implement this new license category within existing resources. If the proposal moves forward, the Department asked the committee to consider incorporating art therapists into CGS Sec. 19a-12a and 19a -12e which would permit a licensed art therapist to participate in the professional assistance program for regulated professions and that the fee associated with this program be deposited into that program account pursuant to CGS Sec. 19a-12c.

Rep. Themis Klarides, Minority Leader, Connecticut General Assembly: Strongly supports this legislation noting that art therapists provide a unique skill and talent which serves to greatly improve the quality of life for people facing various struggles. Requiring art therapists to be licensed will help to ensure those who utilize this valuable service can trust and rely on their treatment.

Rep. Mitch Bolinsky: Strongly supports this bill and urges passage. Properly trained and licensed art therapists would provide an additional level of mental health treatment that has proven to be therapeutic and healing for victims of traumatic events, the elderly and those with intellectual disability.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Mary Pellicci Hamilton, ATR-BC, LPC, former President of CT Art Therapy Association (CATA): Ms. Hamilton strongly supports this legislation and noted the powerful healing benefits of this skill in treating a myriad of conditions. There was a significant need for art therapy treatment following the Newtown Sandy Hook tragedy. She shared that art therapy is the only non-licensed mental health profession listed as reimbursable by the Newtown Collaborative Recovery Fund Reimbursements for “Licensed” mental health providers. There are evidenced-based healing benefits and documented findings on the efficacy of art therapy in treating Veterans with PTSD, those with Alzheimer’s disease and childhood trauma, as well as detoxification from chemical addiction to drugs such as opioids. A master’s degree from an accredited college offering a program recognized by the American Art Therapy Association is required to practice as an art therapist. Ms. Hamilton believes licensure is needed to define the appropriate scope of practice for art therapy in Connecticut ensuring the competent, effective and safe practice of this skill.

Daniel Fitzmaurice, Executive Director, Arts Council of Greater New Haven: Supports this legislation which will serve to expand safe, affordable and effective mental health services in Connecticut. It will also contribute to attracting students and retaining qualified art therapy professionals to our state which is home to the Master of Arts in Art Therapy and Counseling Program offered at Albertus Magnus College.

Stephen Karp, representing the National Association of Social Workers (NASW): The NASW supports this legislation which provides increased consumer protection in the event of a non-licensed art therapist not meeting standards of practice. Mr. Karp notes that the NASW supports the bill because it includes an exemption for other mental health professions such as licensed social workers, who use art therapy in their Scope of Practice as well. The NASW believes that consumers are only fully protected when assured that certain qualifications are met for licensure.

Mary Ellen Hluska, PhD., Assistant Professor of Art Therapy: Ms. Hluska has worked as a licensed Art Therapist for 18 years in both urban and rural Maryland as well as Johns Hopkins Hospital before entering private practice. In her experience, art therapy has proven to be an effective treatment for children who have serious mental illness, experienced urban trauma or have been exposed to domestic violence. Providing for the licensing of Art Therapists in Connecticut, would allow families to access art therapy as a clinical form of treatment for their children. She urges support for this bill.

Dilice Robertson, Doctorate of Nurse Practicing, APRN-BC: In her capacity as a mental health nurse practitioner, Ms. Robertson has worked collaboratively with art therapists and has seen first-hand the significant results achieved through art therapy for her patients who have suffered complex trauma. She urges support of this bill.

The Connecticut Occupational Therapy Association (ConnOTA): ConnOTA supports this legislation provided:

- the licensure process requires the appropriate education and training
- the definition of art therapy does not apply solely to art therapists
- the process is done in a manner that does not infringe upon the scope of practice of existing health professions such as Occupational Therapists who may utilize art in their treatment modalities.

The following submitted testimony in support of this legislation which would:

1. Protect the public by providing services from trained professionals who meet approved educational and credentialing requirements.
2. Provide a service and reimbursement code under public and private insurance to allow for increased affordability to mental health services.
3. Contribute to the economy of Connecticut by attracting and retaining qualified art therapy student and professionals which will potentially expand businesses, increase employment and generate revenue.

- **Diane Kuchta-Humphrey, Co-Owner of an Art Therapy private practice in Milford, CT**
- **Joan Harovas, Registered Nurse at St. Francis Hospital.**
- **Nicole Cry, Art Therapist, The Village for Families and Children, Hartford, CT.**
- **Sandra Lee Tyrrell, Registered and Board Certified Art Therapist in Cheshire, CT.**
- **Carleen Lyden Walker, CEO, Morgan Marketing and Communicatons.**
- **Merlyn Lapaix, Nurse Consultant with Joint Commission Resources, Chicago, Il.**
- **Kendra Carlson, Registered & Board Certified Art Therapist, Stamford, CT.**
- **Debra Gottschalk, Art Therapist and Counselor at United Community Family Services, New London, CT.**

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None submitted.

Reported by: Kathleen Panazza

Date: March 7, 2019