

March 17, 2025

Re: HB 3761 Art Therapy Insurance Reimbursement

To: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

I am writing to express my support of House Bill 3761 which requires the Oregon Health Authority and coordinated care organizations to provide reimbursement in the state's medical assistance program for the cost of behavioral health services provided by licensed art therapists, licensed certified art therapists and provisional licensed art therapists.

This legislation is important because it expands access to therapeutic mental health services, providing access to care for the 1.4 million Oregon Medicaid recipients, addressing disparities in care for low-income and underserved communities. Art therapists are trained both in art and psychological theory, on par with other mental health clinicians. The entry to practice requires a Master's degree in Art Therapy, two-years of supervised clinical practice, and passing a board certification exam. This legislation aligns Oregon with the 13 other states that recognize art therapists as qualified mental health providers and it expands the workforce by providing more mental health providers for clients to access services. Since the Oregon Licensed Certified Art Therapist (LCAT) credential is still relatively new, it is not yet recognized as a billable license under Medicaid. This limits access to mental health services to critically underserved and low-income communities.

I have been the sole art therapist at a 24-hour acute care behavioral health hospital in Portland, Oregon, for 8 years. This hospital has 85 adult in-patient beds, 22 in-patient adolescent beds, and can hold up to 40 adults in emergency services and provides care to people of varying age, race, gender, race, ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, and mental health diagnoses. There, I work as part of the Counseling and Therapy team (which also consists of licensed clinical social workers, counselors, recreational therapists, and a music therapist) and I have provided art therapy groups throughout our hospital. I have seen firsthand how art therapy can provide an important avenue for therapeutic engagement, particularly for individuals who struggle to engage with traditional talk therapy. For many individuals, art therapy proves to be a less intimidating, evidence-based outlet to process trauma, develop coping strategies, and build mindfulness and resilience skills. Without insurance reimbursement, we are limiting Oregonians access to essential mental health care from qualified professionals.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sarah Oldham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sarah" being more prominent and the last name "Oldham" written in a more compact, connected style.

Sarah Oldham
ATR, LAT, LPC, CADC-R