

Charlee Furlow-Marciniak
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April 25th, 2025

Re: HB 3761 Art Therapy Insurance Reimbursement

To: Senate Committee On 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.

As you may already know, in Oregon the need for mental health care is high. In a 2023 study by KFF on mental health and substance use, 32.3% of adults in Oregon with symptoms of anxiety or depression said they needed therapy but didn't get it in the past month, which is higher than the U.S. average of 28.2%. Across the U.S., many kids who need mental health care don't receive it. In 2011, Oregon's age-adjusted suicide rate was higher than the national level.

Art therapists are employed in Oregon in a number of key places, which include Kaiser, Providence, the VA, OHSU, the state hospital, day treatment facilities, schools, outpatient treatment facilities, correctional facilities, domestic violence programs, retirement communities, and private practice. This legislation is important because it expands access to therapeutic mental health services, providing a portal to care for the 1.4 million Oregon Medicaid recipients, addressing disparities in care for low-income and underserved communities. It is our hope that with the support of passing this important legislation, the public will be able to locate and connect with art therapy services and employers will be able to bill for services by Licensed Credentialed Art Therapists ensuring that the credential aligns with their unique specialized care.

I work at New Narrative, which is a non-profit organization that works alongside and for the underserved communities within the Portland area. I work for the Mill Park Center's outpatient team as an outpatient art therapist, where I strive to provide person-centered trauma-informed art therapy to my participants-which largely consists of individuals who are struggling with gaining and maintaining housing and employment, have limited supports, and are within the SPMI population. SPMI is an acronym for serious and persistent mental illness, and diagnosis within this population range from Schizophrenia, Bipolar I and II, Borderline Personality Disorder, and more.

Art therapy provides a deeper, somatic, nonthreatening, and trauma-informed approach to the standard neuro-typical talk therapy that makes up the majority of our mental health systems.

Linear talk therapy can be ineffective for those with treatment resistant disorders, and does not work for everyone as it is not a one-size-fits-all approach-especially for those with SPMI, intellectual and developmental disorders, Autism spectrum disorder or other neurodivergent disorders. By passing this bill, you will be making art therapy, an expressive and active healing practice more accessible to communities of people who might benefit from this type of practice the most, and never had the chance to engage in this type of treatment otherwise.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Charlee Furlow-Marciniak
ATR-P, Professional Counselor Associate, QMHP-R