

Emily Trum ATR-BC, LCAT, LPC
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4/22/2025

Re: HB 3761 Art Therapy Insurance Reimbursement

To: Chair Senator Deb Patterson, Vice- Chair Senator Cedric Hayden, Member Senator Winsvey Campos, Member Senator Diane Linthicum, Member Senator Lisa Reynolds.

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.

A significant truth about art therapy and trauma integration is that neuroscientific research shows intentionally structured art making can bypass the speech area of the brain and tap into the subconscious to promote traumatic memory integration. When led by a well trained art therapist; who understands brain function, physiological function and how those interact with a variety of art materials, PTSD experiences have the potential to integrate faster, smoother and in a more holistic manner. I have witnessed this in my own work. I have attached a research reference at the bottom of this letter for further reading if wanted.

With the knowledge that art therapy pairs so well to support trauma work; where is there not more trauma than our most vulnerable populations on OHP? Supporting the art therapist license to have access to billing Medicaid will go a long way to reduce the mental health crisis we are experiencing with increased access to services. Additionally, it will create access to trauma

treatment that is not only backed by neuroscientific research, but has the potential to expedite what has often been a significantly long term process to change brain function with other forms of trauma based treatment.

References:

Art Therapy and the neuroscience of trauma- (2024) Juliet King & Christinne Strang
Stephen Porges

The Expressive Therapies Continuum as a Framework in the Treatment of Trauma -(2021)
Vija B. Lusebrink & Lisa D. Hinz

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Emily Trum
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