

Simone E. Weisz  
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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.

I work as a mental health clinician for a non profit in Portland, and fill the mental health specialist role in a multidisciplinary team for Multnomah county. I get referrals from Adult Protective Services and the Aging Disability Veteran Services Department, and then deliver services directly to some of our state's most vulnerable individuals in their homes or communities. This work has truly been my honor, and being able to employ my art therapy education and utilizing art therapy interventions with this population has been inspiring. So often the art making process, and other creative processes (food, music) are the things that can connect people and gather communities. Our elders, specifically, are often very isolated and the art therapy

process can bring connection, expression, and healing to their lives. By passing this bill, our most vulnerable populations will have more options and choice in the services they seek, and also have access to a higher number of providers for their mental health care.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Simone Weisz  
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