

CO-SPONSORSHIP MEMO

To: All Legislators

From: Senator Tom Tiffany

Date: February 25, 2020

RE: Co-sponsorship of LRB-5484, relating to: licensing professional art therapists and granting rule-making authority.

Deadline: Tuesday, March 3rd at 5:00pm

I am bringing this proposed legislation forward because professional art therapists are seeking licensure for their occupation in Wisconsin. Art therapists are providers who routinely deliver mental health services to assisted living populations, schools, clinics, social service agencies, community mental health organizations, and traumatic disaster relief. They practice a hands-on, research-driven, ethically bound approach to mental health services. Art therapists provide unique and successful tools for individuals to manage post-traumatic stress disorder, autism spectrum disorder, acute anxiety, and depression.

Currently, eight states and their licensing agencies recognize professional art therapists in the United States. Under current law, art therapists can only practice art psychotherapy if they hold a related license as a mental health practitioner. This subjects art therapists to a “double license” requirement that other professionals, such as clinical social workers and licensed professional counselors, are not required to obtain. This proposed legislation would end the “double license” requirement, eliminate barriers to art therapy practitioners, and create more choices for Wisconsin mental health consumers.

LRB-5484 will establish a licensure program for professional art therapists administered by the Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling, and Social Work Examining Board. This bill grants a professional art therapist license to an applicant who meets requirements established by this law.

Without licensing, professional art therapists must face growing barriers to practicing art therapy. Since art therapists cannot bill insurance for their service unless they carry a related psychotherapy license, they are bound to two sets of rules, certification requirements, and national accreditation agencies. This law would free art therapists to practice art therapy skills and knowledge as a professional mental health provider with the responsibilities and representation as accorded to all other providers in Wisconsin.

If you would like to sign on to this letter, please respond to this email or call Senator Tiffany’s office at 6-2509 by **Tuesday, March 3rd at 5pm.**

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

This bill establishes a licensure program for professional art therapists administered by the Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling, and Social Work Examining Board. The bill defines “professional art therapy” and provides that, subject to certain exceptions, a person may practice professional art therapy only if the person holds a professional art therapist license. The examining board may grant a professional art therapist license to an applicant who, among other things, receives a master's or doctorate degree in professional art therapy, completes courses related to diagnosis, prevention, treatment, or resolution of mental, emotional, behavioral, and addiction disorders, engages in a certain amount of hours of supervised practice of professional art therapy, and passes an approved examination. The bill authorizes the examining board to promulgate rules that require professional art therapists to complete continuing education requirements every two years to renew their licenses.

The bill adds two licensed professional art therapists and one public member to the examining board. Under the bill, the examining board investigates, holds hearings, and makes findings pertaining to violations of the bill. The examining board may reprimand a professional art therapist or deny, limit, suspend, or revoke a professional art therapist license if it finds that license holder has violated the bill.