

Madame Chair Harhart and members of the Pennsylvania House Licensure Committee:

My name is Jennifer Keener and I am the mother of a daughter with Down Syndrome. I am writing to give my support to House Bill 1438 seeking to create a state board of professional music therapy licensure that will recognize the MT-BC (music therapist - board certified) national credential in Pennsylvania. This bill is important because it will allow Pennsylvania citizens to more easily access music therapy services and it will protect the public by ensuring that these services are provided by trained and qualified practitioners.

My daughter Abigail has received music therapy services for 4 years. Our first experience with music therapy happened while she was inpatient during treatment for Leukemia starting when Abby was 3 ½ years old. Visits from the music therapist were a bright spot in a very long day. They would play fun songs and bring instruments so Abby could play along. If she wasn't feeling well they would play quiet soothing songs to help her relax and rest. They geared their sessions to Abby's needs, how she was feeling that day, the skills she was working on, and where she was developmentally.

When Abigail was 4 ½ we began working with Music therapy students at Elizabethtown College. We continue to participate in these clinics today. The clinics have enhanced her learning experience. The students and the professor create songs and activities to help us reach her goals in her IEP. She has made leaps and bounds in learning letters and numbers, increasing her vocabulary, expanding her sentences, and following directions. They also assisted in her physical development by incorporating movement into their songs. Another positive aspect from music therapy has been the development of her social skills. She is with peers of similar age and developmental level and has learned sharing, taking turns and conversation skills.

Abigail loves music and dancing. She is excited every week to go to music therapy and frequently asks if it is time to go. She names her friends and asks if they will be there. With a diagnosis of Down Syndrome comes developmental delays, cognitive learning delays and physical development difficulties. Having Leukemia has made learning and growing even more difficult due to the harsh effects of chemotherapy. Music therapy has come alongside our family to be a part of our team of teachers and therapists helping Abby to grow and overcome obstacles.

Please support efforts to establish a state board of professional music therapy licensure by voting "yes" on House Bill 1438.

Sincerely,

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