

HOUSE PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE COMMITTEE
INFORMATIONAL MEETING ON HOUSE BILL 1356
AUGUST 8, 2023
TESTIMONY: Judy Simpson, MT-BC

Chair Burns, Chair Metzgar, and members of the House Professional Licensure committee, thank you for this opportunity to speak in support of establishing a music therapist license in Pennsylvania. My name is Judy Simpson. I am a board certified music therapist and serve as the Director of Government Relations for the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA).

Music therapy is a nationally recognized allied health profession with over 70 years of clinical history in the United States. The profession was started within the Veterans' Administration healthcare system following World Wars I and II when musicians offered successful interventions to soldiers diagnosed with what we know today as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Our national association was founded in 1950, and is responsible for maintaining standards in music therapy education, clinical training, clinical practice, professional and advanced competencies and a Code of Ethics.

Some examples of music therapy national recognition include:

- United States Code
- Department of Education
- Department of Labor
- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
- Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System
- National Provider Identifier system required by HIPAA

Despite inclusion in federal statutes, rules, and clarifications within healthcare and education, consumers continue to encounter misrepresentation of the profession from non-qualified individuals. They consistently experience barriers to service access due to the lack of inclusion of the profession and its national board certification credential within state statutes and agency regulations.

To address this issue, the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) and the Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT) collaborate on a joint national initiative to achieve state recognition of the music therapy profession and the MT- BC credential required for competent practice. Working with task forces of state-based music therapists, we support advocacy efforts focused on the following outcomes: 1) improving consumer access to music therapy services; and 2) establishing a state-based public protection program to ensure that "music therapy" is provided by

individuals who meet established training qualifications. In other states we have also found that inclusion within state health and education regulations through licensure has a positive impact on meeting staff requirements of treatment facilities and accrediting organizations.

There are currently 13 states that have established a music therapy license: **Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Nevada, New Jersey, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Virginia and Washington.** Additionally, four states (California, Iowa, Utah, and Wisconsin) have enacted other forms of state recognition, such as registration, certification, and title protection. It is interesting to note that states near Pennsylvania (Maryland, New Jersey, Ohio, and Virginia) have all established licensure programs, enticing music therapists who trained in one of Pennsylvania's 10 education programs to leave the state for employment opportunities.

Along with Pennsylvania, the following states have introduced or are planning to introduce music therapy licensure legislation in 2023: **Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, and Wisconsin.** Many of these states had successful hearings, with some achieving passage in one legislative body, and will be able to continue advocating for these existing bills in 2024.

As a national association representative that works with all the states seeking licensure, I want to highlight the good faith efforts music therapists have made to reach compromises within bill language. Throughout our state recognition efforts, we have focused on public protection and access to quality services. We believe it is important for consumers to be able to benefit from the interdisciplinary team approach that exists among music therapists and our peers in other healthcare professions at the clinical level.

HB 1356 reflects collaboration with other professional associations in an effort to achieve consensus on legislative language that has been adopted in other states. A significant agreement was reached with the American Speech Language Hearing Association in 2022 regarding clarifications between music therapy and speech-language pathology. HB 1356 includes this new language. We are confident that after several years of negotiations, we have bill language that successfully addresses previous concerns from interested parties.

Enactment of music therapist licensing programs across the country has ultimately been driven by acknowledging the need for public protection. Since music therapists work with vulnerable populations (for example, persons with intellectual or emotional disabilities, or persons coping with physical, mental, or terminal illness), it is imperative to define this profession within state government in order to safeguard members of the public who may be less able to protect themselves. Music therapy licensure would help ensure that in complex treatment situations, such clients are afforded services that optimize health-gaining opportunities by ensuring consumers are served by a highly qualified music therapist with specialized education and clinical training. HB 1356 will address these consumer issues, ensuring competency across all music therapy clinical practice areas.

Now is the time for Pennsylvania to formally recognize music therapy through licensure.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 1356.

Respectfully Submitted,

Judy Simpson, MT-BC
Managed Healthcare Professional
Director of Government Relations
simpson@musictherapy.org
301-589-3300 x105