

**TESTIMONY OF  
AMY TIELEMANS**

**ON BEHALF OF  
PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS**

**BEFORE THE  
HOUSE PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE COMMITTEE ON HB 1356**

**TUESDAY, August 8, 2023  
10:00 A.M.**

Good morning, Chairman Burns, Chairman Metzger and members of the Committee. My name is Amy Tielemans and I am the Legislative Director for the Pennsylvania Association of Marriage and Family Therapists otherwise referred to as PAMFT. Thank you for inviting PAMFT to testify before you on legislation HB1356 introduced by Representative Pashinski.

PAMFT is the professional association for the field of marriage and family therapy (MFT), which represents the interests of licensed marriage and family therapists and students of marriage and family therapy within the Commonwealth. Its members work in private practice, courts, schools, health intuitions, child protective services, mental health treatment centers, research centers, businesses, and other organizations to assess, diagnose and treat mental and emotional and behavioral disorders within the context of family or larger social systems. MFTs are licensed by the State of Pennsylvania and must undergo extensive education, training, clinical fieldwork and pass a rigorous exam to demonstrate professional competency and meet the highest ethical standards of the profession.

It is important to be clear that PAMFT supports music therapy and believes in the therapeutic benefits it provides for a variety of physical, neurological, developmental, and intellectual impairment as well as enriching the emotional well-being across many diagnoses. PAMFT is in support of licensing Music Therapists and protecting the title of music therapists as written in the proposed legislation.

However, the Pennsylvania State Board of Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors protects consumers from unprofessional, improper, unauthorized, and unqualified mental health providers as well as regulates the practice of mental health care providers all of which have master's degrees and are licensed to diagnose and practice independently with the exception of Bachelor Licensed Social Workers who by scope are not permitted to work directly with consumers.

Music therapists, by their own description, do not diagnose mental health disorders using the Diagnostic Statistical Manual. Music therapists work with consumers managing speech and communication disorders, autistic spectrum disorders, Alzheimer's disease, developmental and intellectual disorders, traumatic brain injuries, visual and physical impairments, after receiving a diagnosis by a licensed clinical provider. Music therapists are not clinically trained to treat mental health issues or manage a patient with suicide ideation.

PAMFT believes that Music therapists by their own description, would be more appropriately licensed with speech therapists, occupational therapists, or behavioral therapists, where their scope of practice is within the same groups of consumers. Without a master's degree and strong mental health education at the highest level the music therapists are not prepared for sitting on our board as an autonomous group that does not meet the focus of our mental health consumers nor the scope of our practice as it is written.

PAMFT is also concerned for consumer confusion if music therapists are licensed under the same board as mental health providers. There are several "loopholes" in our Pennsylvania regulations that allow unlicensed people to practice mental health care by calling themselves coaches and psychotherapists as well as continue to advertise that they practice marriage and family therapy without the specific license or education to do so. PAMFT believes that adding music therapists to the board title alludes to them being mental health providers.

It is important to remember that those music therapists who wish to treat mental illness have an already established path to licensing through the State Board of Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors.

It has long been recognized that the creative arts which include, but are not limited to, music, art, dance and movement, and drama are valued and needed in the delivery of mental health services especially to children, the elderly, and clients faced with a wide variety of challenges which include those who are hearing impaired and non-verbal, have cognitive deficits, brain injuries and those who are marginalized, institutionalized or have suffered trauma.

Currently in Pennsylvania, those desirous of delivering of these important mental health services and want a license to practice, and who have a master's degree in a creative art can apply for a professional counseling license through the State Board of Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors established by Act 136 of 1998.

It is important to share the history and background for inclusion of the creative arts licensing in our state. Prior to the enactment of our licensing statute, PAMFT was approached by the art therapy and dance therapy organizations on behalf of schools offering degrees in creative arts. We presented them with the information about the license and asked them to share this with others in the creative arts fields. This occurred in 1996 and 1997, with the Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselor licensing statute eventually getting signed into law as Act 136 of 1998.

Prior to the enactment of Act 136 of 1998 however, PAMFT was informed that most of the members practicing with their specialties in the "creative arts" were already graduating at master's degree levels. A review of their education and experience was conducted by the appropriate standing legislative committees, which in turn, determined that these individuals had met or exceeded the necessary education requirements for a license as a professional counselor. During further deliberations, the committees were approached by master level music clinicians who likewise wanted to be included in the license. The committees reviewed their master level education and agreed that their degrees were also in a related field and could be included. The committees allowed their certification and licensing exam to be included in

the exams offered to become licensed as a licensed professional counselor in Pennsylvania along with the other creative arts. This information can be found under Title 49 PaCode §49.1(i) (Definitions & Master's degree in a field closely related to the practice of professional counseling) and §49.11(4) (Licensing Examination).

Previous discussions with the legislature held that clinical client contact needed to be done at the master level with proper education and training that included an internship under supervision and a post master's work experience with supervision on the job training both of which are currently contained in Pennsylvania regulations today. As in all the creative arts degrees, the specific type of creative art would be their specialty such as music, but the added mental health coursework at the master's level was determined to be necessary to bring more appropriate training and supervision for the clinical client contact, assure an ethical standard, refer when necessary, and maintain continued education as required by law.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our views on HB 1356. I would be happy to answer any questions.