

HOUSE PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE COMMITTEE
INFORMATIONAL MEETING ON HOUSE BILL 1356

AUGUST 8, 2023

TESTIMONY: Michelle Muth, MT-BC

Good morning Chair Burns, Chair Metzgar, and members of the House Professional Licensure committee. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss HB 1356 seeking professional licensure for music therapy in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. My name is Michelle Muth, I am a board-certified Music Therapist (MT-BC), certified music educator and founder of M3 Music Therapy, a woman-owned business in Beaver County, Pennsylvania. I serve as co-chair of the Pennsylvania Music Therapy Task Force along with Dr. Nicole Hahna who you will be hearing from on this panel.

We are here today to educate, inform and advocate for professional music therapy licensure. Today's voices will be a blend of music therapists and consumers of music therapy including:

- A family in which music therapy has been a part of their lives for 16 years
- Music therapy clinician from Children's Hospital and her work with babies in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit
- Professors from Duquesne University's music therapy department: One from an international perspective and one who is both an MT-BC and LPC
- Leading up and coming music therapy Business owner in the Pittsburgh area who in part of her story, shares that because she is not licensed her growing company cannot be an "in-network" provider for other licensed professionals

All of us are advocating for the professional licensure of music therapy.

Before delving into why licensure is important and necessary for the citizens of Pennsylvania it is important that each of you have a clear understanding as to what exactly music therapy is and that is where I will begin.

According to the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) and the Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT) music therapy is

The clinical and evidenced-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program.

That is the official definition of music therapy and one that is very important in defining what it is we do and leads to our scope of practice but, unfortunately, it often leaves one wondering what IS music therapy?

To state it another way, music therapists use music intentionally with our clients to meet a non-musical goal. This could be:

- Hearing a non-verbal autistic child sing "I love you" to their parents for the first time
- Stabilizing the gait of someone with Parkinson's
- Hear a person who lost their speech due to a traumatic brain injury, sing "Happy Birthday" to their child.

Why Music?

Music is a part of our lives. We use music to relax, keep us company in the car, workout, dance, sing, create atmosphere at work or at events, even lull us to sleep. Music often marks major life events. It helps us to feel understood, reflective, hopeful, expressive and inspired. Music creates connection, reduces stress, eases pain, fosters expression and so much more.

Again, Why music?

How is music able to do all of this? Much has to do with how music interacts with the brain. In fact, music helps with neuroplasticity which is the ability of the brain to make new connections and prune those unused, and it occurs all across the lifespan. From ages 0-4 our brain is an empty canvas, creating new connections. It is not until around 4 years of age that the brain starts pruning unused connections and is always creating new ones. What does the brain need for neuroplasticity to happen? There are 4 main components:

1. Dopamine
2. Synchrony
3. A clear signal
4. The whole brain

How does music fit in?

Research has discovered that music stimulates the dopaminergic regions of the brain. Evidence demonstrates that singing takes less effort for the brain to process than speech thus creating a clearer signal. The rhythm in music, a consistent pulse, measurement in time allows for movement together which creates synchrony. Lastly, music is a whole brain activity it engages multiple brain areas.

Music stimulates neuroplasticity - Music changes the brain

What does music therapy look like:

It looks different for each person with whom we work and can often look like entertainment or even music education. To visualize the difference between an entertainer/music volunteer and music therapist imagine entering a skilled-nursing facility and seeing an individual singing or, perhaps, playing an accordion or other instrument, in front of a group of residents. These individuals most often have with them a set list of songs and provide a leisure/entertainment experience for the residents often helping them to feel "better" afterwards. This is not music therapy but entertainment and is often provided by skilled musicians or volunteers.

However, you might see a music therapist doing something that looks quite similar, singing and/or playing instruments with a group. What you may not see is that each music therapy experience is done with intention. Treatment goals and objectives have already been determined after an assessment process. Perhaps it is a group of participants in which their primary diagnosis is stroke and they are working on recovery. Goals might be to strengthen the arm of the affected side of the body OR re-establish language ability. As you look around you see the music therapist holding a drum in front of an individual with a mallet gently strapped to their wrist so that they can play the drum. You might also see the music therapist provide support to that weakened arm so that it is not injured. The large movement they use to hit the drum is meeting the goal of "strengthen the arm of the affected side of the body." While at the same time, everyone is singing "All you need is Love." Participants may not sing every word but the music therapist provides strategic pauses in the music to prompt the next word, thus working on the goal of re-establishing or improving language ability. In this situation, the music therapist is very aware of their client(s) needs and responds to the music. If an entertainer or music volunteer were to do the same with the drum activity - they could cause injury to the client by not supporting the weakened arm, using the wrong size/weight of the mallet; playing the song too fast. etc.

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

Pennsylvania's Health Care Workers

In your packets you will see a press release from former Governor Wolf's office describing a statewide initiative to provide music therapy to health care workers. While no longer a pandemic, COVID has taken a horrendous toll on our overworked health care workers. Governor Wolf through the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts (PCA)

sought a way to help our frontline health care workers through music therapy. In June of 2021, Governor Wolf and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts granted \$500,000 to the Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP) to create the first ever statewide initiative to provide music therapy to health care workers provided solely by board certified music therapists - not musicians on call, not music entertainers but board certified music therapists. The Pennsylvania Music Therapy Task force worked closely with PCA and HAP in developing this program. It is the largest grant that the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts has ever given and the largest grant given towards music therapy in the USA. The importance of music therapy and the need for it to be provided by qualified individuals was noted at the highest level of our state government. Now is the time for Pennsylvania to formally recognize music therapy through licensure.

The HAP Music Therapy Collaborative programs across the state have made a significant difference in the lives of the Commonwealth's health care workers. One of the music therapists providing services shared this story with me.

"I'm so happy I pulled this assignment two days in a row and get music therapy ..when I came home last night my husband thought I'd been on the infant unit because I didn't need to have quiet alone time to de-stress when I walked in the door.. I was able to be with him and was in a good mood he asked me if I'd been on the infant unit and I told him no but I had music therapy on my unit! Some of the nurses are even dancing a down the hall as they are giving meds or at their mobile chart carts... ;) she shared that with me last week as I was playing on the unit

Why Professional Licensure?

With HB 1356 we are seeking music therapy licensure that encompasses the full scope of practice for our field in order to protect citizens of Pennsylvania.

Consumer Protection: While board certified music therapists (MT-BC) have a national credential it is not recognized at the state level. Without licensure there is **NO requirement** for music therapists to follow the AMTA *Code of Ethics* or the AMTA/CBMT *Scope of Music Therapy Practice*. And **NO state wide sanctions** for violation of the code of ethics or scope of practice. Our national organization, the American Music Therapy Association, is a voluntary membership organization and cannot require ethical practice without licensure. The Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT) has **NO** legal jurisdiction to prevent the practice of music therapy in Pennsylvania. Music therapy **licensure would require** all Pennsylvania music therapists to follow the music therapy **code of ethics, scope of practice**, and

continuing education. It would protect consumers by establishing a system to investigate complaints of alleged harm in PA. Music therapists currently work with over 49,000 Pennsylvanians.

Music therapists work with some of the Commonwealth's most vulnerable citizens; citizens for whom the state should be responsible for protecting and providing them access to qualified and competent practitioners. You may read from the Department of State that we already have a body that can regulate the profession, our Certification board for Music Therapists (CBMT). While CBMT does provide a private/national credential, outlines consumer remedies and has the authority to de-certify an individual who violates CBMT standards, policies and procedures they have NO LEGAL AUTHORITY to implement disciplinary actions at the state level. Yes, they can remove my credential of MT-BC, but because there is no legal repercussion. I could continue using the credential and more importantly call myself a "music therapist" with absolutely no accountability because there is no state regulation. Our most vulnerable need protecting by an organization with legal authority in the state and the only way this can happen is with state licensure.

Exemption language

In HB1356 we are NOT claiming ownership of music. The bill includes language that recognizes that many professions use music within their own scope of practice and the bill includes language that any certified professional or occupation may use music if the individual does not represent that the person is a music therapist or providing music therapy.

Music Therapy is an important, non-pharmacologic, mode of therapy that works across the lifespan with people in all walks of life. It is not frivolous, it is not the same as listening to your favorite music to relax. It is an evidence-based practice requiring the expertise of a skilled musician, the mind of a clinician and the heart of a social worker. It is where music and science meet.

I ask that the committee vote "yes" on HB 1356 and move it out of committee to the floor.

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