



December 20, 2024

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

On behalf of the American Art Therapy Association (AATA), including 579 members in the state of New York, I am writing to urge you to sign A9018/S8715 into law. This bill would authorize Licensed Creative Arts Therapists to bill Medicaid directly for their services. AATA is a national professional membership organization that represents 4,200 practitioners, educators and researchers engaged in the art therapy profession, including over 600 art therapists credentialed by the Art Therapy Credentials Board (ATCB) in the state of New York. The Association works in concert with the New York Art Therapy Association and 31 state chapters and various regional coalitions to promote the highest standards of art therapy practice to the public.

New York's Licensed Creative Arts Therapist (LCAT) license has been available since 2006, and A9018/S8715 aims to increase access to the critical mental health services LCATs provide. The 2,000+ LCATs in the state provide care in a myriad settings, including state-operated agencies and clinics as well as inpatient and outpatient treatment hospitals and substance abuse treatment facilities, but are limited in their ability to bill Medicaid for their services. Allowing LCATs to directly bill Medicaid will not increase the state's overall budget, but instead add more providers for psychotherapy, an already covered service.

Art therapists, and other creative arts therapists, are uniquely qualified to work with the most vulnerable communities, including clients who may not be able to fully express their needs verbally such as children, those suffering from memory loss, and non-English speakers. These therapies offer a means of communication for clients who cannot find the words to express anxiety, pain or emotions as a result of trauma, combat, physical abuse, loss of brain function, depression, severe illness, and other debilitating health conditions.

While other master's-level mental health practitioners are trained to employ cognitive and verbal interventions, art therapists are trained in art-based interventions that stimulate the brain's tactile-haptic, visual, sensory, and perceptual channels to allow integrated verbal and non-verbal processing of emotions. Understanding of the potential for artmaking to reveal emotions, along with the knowledge and skill to safely manage the reactions it may evoke in different clients, are competencies that are unique to art therapy.

Art therapy is backed by peer-reviewed research that indicates the efficacy of art therapy interventions, especially for those struggling to benefit from talk therapy interventions. It has been shown to [engage the brain's reward pathways](#), [reduce stress](#), and be effective in [addressing anxiety and depression](#) and [alleviating physical pain](#). Every day, art therapists work with individuals of all ages, including children who are experiencing behavioral challenges or those with Autism Spectrum Disorder. They assist people in health crises, victims of violence or other trauma, older adults with dementia, and anyone that is struggling with mental health issues. Thus, this bill is a timely and publicly supported solution to closing gaps in mental health care.

Art therapists undergo rigorous training and are held to professional standards comparable to those of other licensed mental health practitioners in New York, making them equally qualified as those currently listed as Medicaid providers. For example, both counselors and LCATs are required to earn a master's or doctoral degree in their respective field and a minimum of 1,500 contact hours of post-degree supervised experience.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to strengthening New York's mental health system and supporting the state's most vulnerable populations. We urge you to sign this critical legislation into law, improving Medicaid coverage to include licensed creative arts therapy. If you have any questions, please contact Meredith Ashley, Policy and Communications Coordinator, at mashley@arttherapy.org or 703-567-9701.

Sincerely,



Nadia Paredes, MA, LMFT, ATR
President, American Art Therapy Association