

Maryland Insurance Reimbursement Bill Approved Unanimously

AATA

April 20, 2017

On Tuesday April 18, [H.B. 298](#), **Health Insurance - Licensed Clinical Professional Art Therapists – Reimbursement**, was approved by Governor Larry Hogan! The bill passed unanimously through the House (2/24/17) with a vote of 136 to 0 and the Senate (3/28/17) with a vote of 47 to 0 following favorable reports by the House Health and Government Operations Committee and the Senate Finance Committee. The bill goes into effect on October 1, 2017 and will provide private insurance reimbursement for art therapy services provided by licensed clinical professional art therapists on an equal basis with other mental health professions licensed by the state of Maryland. To read more on the details and history of this bill, visit the [General Assembly of Maryland](#) or [LegiScan](#) pages.

The new law will close a loophole some insurers found to an existing law that already qualified licensed clinical art therapists for reimbursement. The Maryland legislature amended the Health and Occupations Article of the state code in 2012 to provide for licensure and regulation of clinical professional art therapists on a similar basis as clinical professional counselors, clinical marriage and family therapists, and clinical alcohol and drug counselors that were previously licensed under the Article.

In an [article](#) published in our August 24, 2016 issue of *Art Therapy Today*, Amanda Bechtel, ATR-BC, LCPC, LCPAT, explained the problem in simple terms: “While art therapists in Maryland fall under a mandate for coverage of mental health services, insurance companies were not aware of the new license and many art therapists seeking coverage had to appeal their claims and credentialing status.”



Art therapists who testified for the initial clinical art therapist reimbursement legislation (2012). From left: (front) Amanda Bechtel and Elizabeth Hlavek; (back) Jill Scheibler, Cathy Goucher, Erin McConnell, and Peggy Kolodny.

In more specific terms, a section of the insurance code (*Section 15-701*) stated that any person covered by an insurance policy or contract that provides for reimbursement for a service that is within the lawful scope of practice of a “health care provider licensed under the Health Occupations Article” (which includes art therapists) is entitled to reimbursement for that service. Another section of the code (*Section 15-704*) sought to clarify *Section 15-701*, for purposes of services provided by mental health providers, by identifying the three mental health professions that, at that time, had been licensed. However, most insurance providers tended to take a strict reading of *Section 15-704* to determine that only services provided by the three identified mental health professions qualified for reimbursement.

H.B. 298 resolves this problem by updating *subsection (b)* of *Section 15-704* to include “licensed clinical professional art therapists” among the qualifying mental health counseling professions listed under *Section 15-701*.

The AATA congratulates the hard and dedicated work of our chapter, the [Maryland Art Therapy Association \(MATA\)](#), in advocating both for the initial reimbursement legislation and this Title amendment. In particular, we would like to thank AATA members Amanda Bechtel, MATA’s representative to AATA’s Government Affairs Committee who spearheaded the chapter’s efforts, and Elizabeth Hlavek for their strong advocacy and leadership that led to this accomplishment for the profession.

