



March 15, 2023

Dear Oregon State Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Dr. Mary Andrus and I am the Program Director and an Assistant Professor of the Masters in Art Therapy Program in the Graduate School of Counseling and Education at Lewis and Clark. Students in our program are placed at Serendipity for practicum and internship placements and are supervised by an alum of our program who is a licensed art therapist. I'm writing to ask you to support a bill that will come up for a hearing in the Senate Education Committee on March 21st. Senate Bill 633 sets aside critical funding for Oregon's highest needs students. The bill would establish special education multi-district collaborative model which promotes the establishment of a network of special education centers in Oregon dedicated to healing our youth who struggle with the most acute mental health and disability challenges.

Serendipity is a crucial resource for the Portland community. It provides necessary mental health care for students who otherwise would not be able to get the support they need in the public school system. It is a unique program that employs and trains art therapists. Art Therapy offers ways for youth to find community, safety, take action, explore feelings and create belonging.

- Community: Help them connect with others, bringing people back into their life. Art reflects who they are as human beings.
- Safety/regulation: Help them go deep inside- provide tools to stay calm and find a safe place. Art helps the client envision & stay calm.
- Taking effective action: Cultivation of imagination to create self-ownership, the key to survival. Art helps them feel competent and good at something.
- Help them describe and know how they feel-Often they remember the trauma or pain as a sensation not as a narrative. Art provides a container for what they experience and is an extension of how they feel.
- Belonging: Help them find a deep sense of who they are as beings. Art becomes a reflection of their story.

Funding this bill would help ensure that this program can continue to thrive and grow. This growth would provide much needed resources to implement a needed art therapy studio, supporting additional Art Therapy interns and more art therapy and mental health support for the Serendipity youth.

As a strong believer in Serendipity Center's mission and model to provide evidence-based, trauma-informed services to public school students, I support Senate Bill 633. This bill would advance the field of special education and children's mental health in Oregon so that more students will receive an equitable education experience and thrive. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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