



Testimony for the 2024 NEW YORK STATE EXECUTIVE BUDGET for HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

My name is Tina McCourt and I work as Program Director at The Rebecca School an independent private day school in New York City that specializes in teaching children ages three to twenty-one who have a range of neurodevelopmental delays, including autism spectrum disorder

I am an LCSW with 30 years' experience working in schools for children with neurodevelopmental delays in relating and communicating. I am a member of NASW. I am also a board member of ICDL the International Council on Development and Learning.

I am grateful to the Governor and legislature for the increased attention to the mental health needs of New Yorkers and the shortage of therapists to care for them. Our treatment team is interdisciplinary and includes social workers, MDs, NPs, psychologists, and NYS licensed mental health practitioners including LCATs (Licensed Creative Arts Therapists).

We currently employ 6 Licensed Creative Arts Therapists who work on the front lines of our mental health crisis.

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of myself and our organization due to urgent concern that the proposed Health and Mental Hygiene Bill Part Q be amended to include LCATs who are currently providing essential mental health care to many of our most vulnerable New Yorkers. There is a great need and we have heard that there are not enough providers working with Medicaid consumers. LCATs have experience with this population and can immediately help close the gap in care.

Excluding nearly 2000 licensed providers undermines the state's ability to solve the current crisis. We at the Rebecca School deeply value the front-line psychotherapy services our LCATs provide to our students and families, many of whom struggle with anxiety, self-harm, PTSD, depression, ADHS and OCD. communication disorders,

LCATs have specialized skills and training in providing psychotherapy to those who are not effectively served by talk therapy methods. This includes people from different cultures, non-English



speakers, BIPOC, and LGBTQI+ communities. Creative arts therapists are often the first responders after events of unspeakable traumas like mass violence and natural disasters, in working with young children exposed to violence and abuse, and with youth and adults, including veterans who have PTSD.

Please include these highly qualified, highly effective existing mental health professionals in this very important bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tina McCourt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tina" and last name "McCourt" clearly distinguishable.

Tina McCourt, LCSW, SAS, SDA

Program Director