

Senate Fiscal Agency  
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**SFA****BILL ANALYSIS**

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Senate Bill 235 (as reported without amendment)  
Sponsor: Senator Joanne G. Emmons  
Committee: Economic Development, International Trade and Regulatory Affairs

Date Completed: 6-5-98

### **RATIONALE**

Therapeutic recreation specialists, also known as recreation therapists, provide treatment programs and recreational activities to individuals with illnesses or disabling conditions. Their focus is to help integrate people with disabilities into the community by helping them use community resources and recreational activities. (See **BACKGROUND** for more information on therapeutic recreation specialists.) Although a national certification may be obtained through the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC) by qualified individuals to become *certified* therapeutic recreation specialists, currently there are no regulations in Michigan to license, certify, or register therapeutic recreation specialists. Some people believe that a State registration of therapeutic recreation specialists would protect the public from those with insufficient training and help recognize a therapeutic recreation specialist as a legitimate professional.

### **CONTENT**

**The bill would amend the Public Health Code to provide for the registration of therapeutic recreation specialists. The bill would do the following:**

- Establish a \$20 application processing fee and a \$60 annual registration fee.
- Create the Michigan Board of Recreational Therapy.
- Incorporate professional standards for the Board's guidance.
- Require applicants to pass an examination and meet educational requirements for registration.

The bill would define "therapeutic recreation specialist" as an individual who provided

therapeutic recreation services and was registered under the Code. "Therapeutic recreation" or "recreation therapy" would mean the provision of treatment services and recreation services to individuals with illnesses and disabling conditions. Therapeutic recreation would include individualized assessment to collect systemic, comprehensive, and accurate information necessary to determine and implement treatment services; the evaluation and revision of treatment services; and the development of a discharge plan relative to treatment services.

"Treatment services" would mean services designed to restore, remediate, or rehabilitate to improve functioning and independence as well as to reduce or eliminate the effects of illness or disability through treatment intervention. "Recreation services" would mean the specific use of services designed to provide resources and opportunities to improve health and well-being through recreation intervention.

The bill would create the Michigan Board of Recreational Therapy in the Department of Consumer and Industry Services (DCIS). The Board would consist of the following five voting members: three registered recreation therapeutic specialists and two public members. The registered specialists also would have to meet additional Code requirements concerning national certification or approval and/or active practice or teaching in the profession (MCL 333.16135(2)).

For guidance in any action by the Board, the bill would incorporate by reference the professional standards entitled, "Standards for the Practice of Therapeutic Recreation" issued by the American Therapeutic Recreation Association and published in 1992. The Board could amend or supplement the standards by promulgating a rule.

The DCIS would have to issue a registration to an individual who applied to the Department on a form provided by the DCIS; passed an examination accepted by the Board; was of good moral character; fulfilled the educational requirements described in the bill; and met any other requirements established in rules promulgated by the Board. The DCIS would have to issue a registration without examination to an individual who met the remaining requirements and who applied for registration within one year after the bill's effective date.

An individual could satisfy the educational requirements by obtaining at least a baccalaureate degree from an institution of higher education acceptable to the Board with a major in therapeutic recreation or a major in recreation with an option in therapeutic recreation. The degree would have to include at least the following:

- Eighteen semester hours of recreation with at least nine semester hours in therapeutic recreation.
- Eighteen semester hours including three semester hours involving each of the following, with the remaining nine hours involving courses considered human services: anatomy and physiology; abnormal psychology; and human growth and development.

Alternatively, an individual could satisfy the educational requirements by completing at least all of the following:

- Eighteen semester hours of upper division or graduate level therapeutic and general recreation with at least nine semester hours in therapeutic recreation and three semester hours involving each of the following: anatomy and physiology; abnormal psychology; and human growth and development.
- Twenty-four semester hours involving any three of the following subject matter areas: adaptive physical education; biological or physical sciences related to therapeutic recreation; human services; psychology; sociology; or special education.

An individual fulfilling the alternative educational requirements would have to present proof acceptable to the Board of at least five years of full-time paid experience in a clinical, residential, or community-based therapeutic recreation program.

## **BACKGROUND**

Therapeutic recreation specialists help individuals reduce depression, stress, and anxiety; recover their basic motor functioning and reasoning abilities; build confidence; socialize more effectively for independence; and reduce or eliminate the effects of illness or disability. They use a variety of techniques to treat or maintain the physical, mental, and emotional functioning of patients. Treatments may include organized group activities, relaxation programs, community outings, and exercise and rehabilitation routines. For example, a right-handed person with a right-handed paralysis may be instructed in adaptation and compensatory strategies to use his or her left side to perform daily activities. In addition, the specialists observe and record patients' participation, reactions, and adjustment to these treatment programs, and the records are used by others to monitor the recovery and progress of the patient.

The specialists often work in clinical and community settings in public or private agencies, such as hospitals and rehabilitation centers, where they treat and rehabilitate patients with specific health conditions; long-term care facilities and community living arrangements, where they use structured group programs to maintain general health and well-being; communities, where they develop leisure activities for special education, elderly, disabled, and parks and recreation programs; and schools, where they assist in the transition, integration, and use of community resources.

## **ARGUMENTS**

*(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)*

### **Supporting Argument**

The bill would provide for the registration of therapeutic recreation specialists and create the Michigan Board of Recreational Therapy. It would help regulate therapeutic recreation specialists by requiring State registration of individuals who wish to practice therapeutic recreation in Michigan. Currently, there are no licensure, certification, or registration requirements to practice in the State. Essentially, individuals with little or no experience, education, or training may be able to establish themselves in Michigan as a therapeutic recreation specialist. The registration of the profession would help protect patients' safety and health, since therapeutic recreation specialists primarily work with patients who are suffering from physical or emotional disabilities, which require sufficient training, experience, and education.

### **Supporting Argument**

Apparently, since treatment programs may involve arts and crafts, sports, games, and relaxation techniques, therapeutic recreation specialists are often viewed as being merely diversionary and play-oriented in nature. The bill would help eliminate that notion and recognize therapeutic recreation specialists as members of a legitimate profession and an essential component in the rehabilitation and treatment process.

### **Opposing Argument**

The registered specialists could be required to pay twice for the same certification: once for the national certification and again for State registration, according to the executive director of the NCTRC. In addition, the State-registered specialists could represent themselves as being nationally certified when they were not, which would mislead the public. To become nationally certified, specialists must have a bachelor's degree, pass a written certification examination, and complete an internship of at least 360 hours under the supervision of a certified therapeutic recreation specialist.

**Response:** Under the bill, the State would require the therapeutic recreation specialist to be only State-registered, not nationally certified, to practice in Michigan. An individual, however, could be both a certified and registered therapeutic recreation specialist.

Legislative Analyst: N. Nagata

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The Department of Consumer and Industry Services estimates that the creation of this new

license category would cost the Department approximately \$80,000 to \$100,000 to create and develop the associated programs that are required of this type of regulation, such as inspections and administrative support services. Once the programs were established, the revenue generated by licensing fees would be set at a level to offset the administrative costs incurred by the Department.

Fiscal Analyst: M. Tyszkiewicz

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.