



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

CHRISTINA HENDERSON
Councilmember, At-Large
Chairperson, Committee on Health

Committee Member
Hospital and Health Equity
Judiciary and Public Safety
Transportation and the Environment

Statement of Introduction
Alternative Restorative Therapy Options for Youth Amendment Act of 2023
September 26, 2023

Today, I am introducing the Alternative Restorative Therapy (ART) Options for Youth Amendment Act, along with Councilmembers Janeese Lewis George, Charles Allen, Kenyan R. McDuffie, Brooke Pinto, Matthew Frumin, and Robert C. White, Jr.

This bill would make a vital amendment to the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect Act of 1977 by requiring the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) to provide alternative forms of therapy to foster youth, including art therapy, music therapy, drama therapy, dance or movement therapy, and narrative therapy. While CFSA currently offers a broad array of therapy options for youth and families, most do not explicitly facilitate opportunities for youth to non-verbally and physically externalize their experiences in a therapeutic setting.

CFSA-involved youth face unique challenges, ones which traditional talk-based therapies may not fully address. For example, many children and teens in the child welfare system may not want to verbalize, or may struggle to verbalize, their experiences and emotions due to trauma or difficult circumstances. Alternative therapies provide creative and nonverbal avenues for them to express their feelings and experiences.¹ Alternative therapies also offer structured and safe outlets for youth to explore complex emotions. Young people can externalize their feelings, making it easier to discuss and reflect upon their experiences during therapy sessions. Alternative therapies are holistic, engaging different parts of the brain than traditional talk therapy, and allow youth to access and process emotions that may not be reached through traditional therapy options alone.² The expressive processes involved in alternative therapies teach valuable coping strategies that extend beyond therapy sessions, aiding in stress management and facing life's challenges. Finally, alternative therapies can foster a strong therapeutic relationship between the youth and therapists, promoting trust and rapport through collaborative expressive endeavors.³

Holistic and flexible approaches to therapy are essential for the well-being of CFSA-involved youth. While talk-based therapies remain an important tool, alternative therapies provide youth

¹ [Art Therapy with Children](#)

² [The Helpfulness of Holistic Arts-Based Group Work with Children Living in Foster Care](#)

³ [Innovative and Brain-Friendly Strategies for Building a Therapeutic Alliance With Adolescents](#)



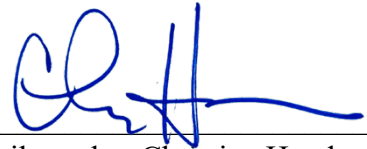
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with the opportunity to grow and heal without having to verbalize the narrative and effects of trauma.


I look forward to working closely with Council colleagues to advance this legislation in the coming months. Together, we can ensure that foster youth in the District of Columbia receive the comprehensive care and support they need and deserve.

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2 Councilmember Charles Allen



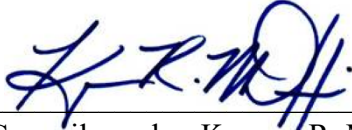
Councilmember Christina Henderson

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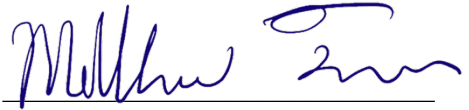
5 Councilmember Janeese Lewis George



Councilmember Brooke Pinto

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8 Councilmember Kenyan R. McDuffie



Councilmember Matthew Frumin

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11 Councilmember Robert C. White, Jr.

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17 A BILL

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21 IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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26 To amend the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect Act of 1977 to require the Child and Family
27 Services Agency to offer alternative forms of therapy to children in the custody of the
28 agency.

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30 BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this act
31 may be cited as the “Alternative Restorative Therapy (ART) Options for Youth Amendment Act of
32 2023”.

33 Sec. 2. Section 303e(b) of the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect Act of 1977, effective
34 June 7, 2012 (D.C. Law 19-141; D.C. Official Code § 4-1303.03e(b)) is amended to read as
35 follows:

36 “(b)(1) The Agency shall connect all children who are assessed as being in need of
37 behavioral health care to an appropriate behavioral health service.

38 (2) The Agency shall make available to children in the agency’s custody alternative
39 forms of therapy, including:

40 “(A) Art therapy;

41 “(B) Music therapy;

42 “(C) Drama therapy;

43 “(D) Dance or Movement therapy; and

44 “(E) Narrative therapy.”.

45 Sec. 3. Fiscal impact statement.

46 The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement in the committee report as the fiscal impact
47 statement required by section 4a of the General Legislative Procedures Act of 1975, approved
48 October 16, 2006 (120 Stat. 2038; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.47a).

49 Sec. 4. Effective date.

50 This act shall take effect after approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the Mayor,
51 action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of congressional review as provided in
52 section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December 24, 1973 (87
53 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code § 1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of Columbia
54 Register.