

The Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee:

We would like to thank the Committee for allowing us to be heard today. The NC Board of Recreational Therapy is committed to giving the residents of NC proper protection and quality services from the Recreational Therapy (RT) practitioners in the state. As we have stated previously, the audit was conducted for the year 2013 which was an unusual year for NCBRTL for the following reasons:

- A fire occurred July 7, 2013 which destroyed some records and our computer. Remaining records were in restoration for 9 months. The office was temporarily moved 3 times during the recovery.

- In 2011-12 NCBRTL noticed an increase in violations so as a proactive measure, began offering Compliance and Ethics Training and thus witnessed a reduction in violations. So in 2012, the Board, by Rule, made the Compliance and Ethics Training mandatory for all first year licensees. In 2013, we realized a 50% reduction rate in violations.

- A newly appointed Board member did not complete the Ethics Commission training in a timely manner and has since resigned.

- In following up on report of NCBRTL reports not being submitted to required agencies, NCBRTL reviewed reports submitted and has not found any of the agencies who did not receive but also resent them. An issue appears to be that some agencies still had NCBRTL listed as TRCB Therapeutic Recreation Certification Board and had not updated records to reflect the 2005 amendment to Chapter 90C which resulted in licensure and the name change.

- The NCBRTL website was created in 2009 and many features were not operating efficiently so in 2013 NCBRTL approved funding for new website rebuild and began taking bids. The new site with a Complaint and Report section is currently being tested and expected to be launched within a few weeks. Our violations reports do not come from the general public because Recreational Therapy is a covered service so it is not a profession where practitioners are typically in private practice. They are employed by larger agencies such as hospitals so reports come from HR Departments, and RT Supervisors directly to NCBRTL. All practitioners are to notify the Board of any disciplinary action within 72 hours of occurrence.

- As far as the mobility to other states, NC is known nationally as a leader in our field. There are nine colleges and university degree programs in NC graduating the third largest numbers of Recreational Therapists in the nation. Recreational Therapy was identified as one of the top professions to allow entry in the healthcare arena with a bachelor's degree. NC also has two assistant level programs at the Community College level meeting all the requirements for Licensed Recreational Therapy Assistants. NCBRTL is one of only 4 states with licensure but is currently assisting with a national initiative to gain licensure in all 50 states. This unified approach is to allow for reciprocity among states. Currently, since state residency is not a requirement, NCBRTL issues licenses to many RTs living outside of NC so others may also hold the credential as a "licensed healthcare professional". NCBRTL currently allows all LRTs in

the military or military spouses Inactive Status and/or additional time to earn continuing education while in active service. NCBRTL has been contacted by the military to identify Durham VA and an agency in Raleigh for internships for veterans seeking degrees in RT.

Recreational Therapy is a unique profession and can be often misunderstood. As we all know, recreation is therapeutic in itself and anyone can play, so many do not understand the high risk the field operates in when applying it in treatment. NCBRTL is committed to ensuring those offering treatment to our clients are competent to offer safe and quality practice. Formerly, when NCBRTL was a certification board (offering title protection only), many agencies including the state chose to not use the job title, allowing nonqualified personnel to offer treatment without meeting educational requirements and training. At that time, we received reports such as a person giving a child a birthday cake who was on a respirator allowing the child to aspirate. Since the individual was practicing under a different title we had no authority over him and could not take action to further protect the public. Another non-certified person was a witness to patient abuse who did not report the incident and again we could not take corrective action. NCBRTL is willing to comply with all state laws and ensure all patients and clients receive quality and safe delivery of services but feel returning to certification will only allow for these situations to occur more frequently-

The US Bureau of Labor has projected employment of Recreational Therapists is projected to grow 13 percent from 2012 to 2022 which is reflected by the large number of educational institutions in our state preparing students for careers and employment opportunities. The Labor Bureau has also noted third party payers will continue to use Recreational Therapists' services as a way to cut costs in patients' recoveries from injuries and illness which benefits us as a state to assure we are ensuring competent service delivery by qualified professionals. They indicate that as the large baby-boom generation ages, they will need Recreational Therapists to help treat age-related injuries and illnesses, such as strokes. Recreational Therapists will also be needed to help patients manage chronic conditions such as diabetes and obesity.

In closing, to contain NCBRTL under another Board or to revert back to a Certification Board would have serious consequences for healthcare consumers due to delayed investigations or Board inability to address incompetent practice and would also diminish the Recreation Therapy profession by fewer students enrolled in our educational programs; fewer and less competent employment pool; and fewer clinical training applicants from out of state coming to North Carolina.