



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**TESTIMONY FOR HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
COMMITTEE**

CHAIR SHANE PENDERGRASS
VICE CHAIR JOSELINE PENA-MELNYK

**HOUSE BILL 233: STATE BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS AND
THERAPISTS – MARYLAND MUSIC THERAPISTS ACT**

SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

January 20, 2021

Good Afternoon Chairman Pendergrass and Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk. I am here today to ask for your support for HB 233 – State Board of Professional Counselors – Maryland Music Therapists Act. Despite the name of the bill, we do not wish to place Music Therapists under the Board of Professional Counselors. I know many of you are dealing with the challenges of this unique session. One way we have all decided to make this session go smoother is to have our bills prefiled. Unfortunately, for this piece of legislation, we had not come to a final agreement with any board when the November deadline arrived. That is why I am asking that you support this bill with an amendment that would place Music Therapists on the Board of Audiology. In addition to changing the Board, the bill reflects negotiations between the Music Therapists and the Board that they have both agreed on. I have been working with the Music Therapists for five years now, and am very happy to come to you today with a bill that is fully supported by all parties involved.

This bill would create a state licensure system for Music Therapists ensuring that they are able to receive all the same benefits and are securitized and qualified in the same way their peers in the medical field are. To be specific, music therapy can be used to address patient needs related to respiration, chronic pain, physical rehabilitation, diabetes, headaches, cardiac conditions, surgery, and obstetrics, among others.

I had my first personal experience with it when my son was injured in an accident. He suffered severe injuries to his whole body and in the weeks following the accident he incurred serious pain when his bandages were being changed. He is still recovering today. To put his mind at ease, a Music Therapist used special headphones to play calming music and sometimes country and rap music. I was shocked at his response, but relieved when there was some level of relief and not the constant push of opioids. I felt blessed that day to have someone with the skills to take care of my son, and provide more than what I could in that space.

Not long after, I was at an event and heard a young woman sing the National Anthem. When speaking to her afterwards, she told me she was attending a school out of state to become a Music Therapist, but unfortunately had to go out of state for her degree, and would not be coming back to Maryland to practice. I thought of my son, and all the other Marylanders who would be deprived of this young woman's care that I had seen work with my own eyes.

Since then, I have been working with members of this panel, and many others along the way to legitimize the practice of Music Therapy. What I have learned in that time is that we must do better as a State and not hinder progress when our medical challenges are too great. We have gone back and forth from one board to the next to give Music Therapy a home and have finally found one with the Board of Audiology. In those five years there have been plenty of accidents like my son's. There have been plenty of veterans suffering from PTSD and plenty of victims of substance abuse who have relapsed because the care being applied to them just isn't working. Music Therapy is a powerful tool in modern medicine and I am happy to say we have finally found a way to make it more accessible to all Marylanders.

For this reason I am asking for a favorable report on HB 233 with the coinciding amendment. Thank you for your time.