

HB233

Health and Government Operations Committee

January 20, 2021

Niki Runge, MCAT, MT-BC

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Niki Runge. I am a board-certified music therapist, Co-Chair of the Maryland Music Therapy State Task Force for Occupational Regulation and the Government Relations Chair for the Maryland Association for Music Therapy. I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to be heard again on behalf of our clients and the Maryland music therapists. Our goal has always been, and continues to be, to increase access to music therapy services and assure that these services are provided by qualified professionals who have completed the education, clinical training, and continuing education required of board-certified music therapists.

I wanted to take the time today to highlight the COVID-19 response from Maryland music therapists. A national COVID-19 survey was conducted in 2020 and found that in Maryland, 2/3 of music therapists who responded were considered essential workers. Music Therapists continued to serve Maryland's most vulnerable citizens through the continuation of in-person sessions and telehealth. Music therapists across the state were able to safely adapt, in the moment to continue to provide services based on clients' needs, and the current level of COVID restrictions. Sessions were conducted through telehealth via pre-recorded videos, live videos, and audio sessions, as well as continued in-person sessions, involving outdoor, and window visits. As we continue through the pandemic, without a state license these frontline workers are not eligible for the Phase 1A distribution of the COVID vaccine with related healthcare professionals. This puts clients, family members of clients, and colleagues at increased risk of contracting the virus. This is one more example of the inconsistencies in the ability to keep our clients safe when accessing services and how music therapists are recognized in the state without a license.

As we are working with the Board of Audiologists, Hearing-Aid Dispensers and Speech-Language Pathologists, we ask that the committee approve HB233, with amendments suggested by the board.

Thank you for your time.



Niki Runge, MCAT, MT-BC