



Maryland Occupational Therapy Association

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Committee:	Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Bill:	Senate Bill 362 – Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act
Hearing Date:	February 29, 2024
Position:	Support with Amendment

The Maryland Occupational Therapy Association (MOTA) urgently requests an amendment to Senate Bill 362 – The Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act. We fully understand that this legislation is necessary to balance the state’s budget; but we ask for the Committee’s consideration in reversing the proposed fund transfer of \$776,646 from the Board of Occupational Therapy Practice to the general fund.

Just as other health occupations boards, the Board of Occupational Therapy Practice is entirely funded by occupational therapy practitioners through licensure fees. The proposed fund transfer is arbitrary and harmful:

- **Arbitrary and Disproportionate:** The proposed fund transfer would leave the Board of Occupational Therapy Practice with a fund balance that is just 68% of its annual budget. According to the Department of Legislative Services, this transfer would place the Board of Occupational Therapy Practice behind ten other boards with higher fund balances. The BRFA contemplates fund transfers from two other health occupational boards, but leaves those Boards with fund balances that are both around 120% of their annual budgets.¹ **The proposed fund balance transfer in BRFA will have a disproportionately high impact on the Board of Occupational Therapy Practice. We know of no reason why the Board would be singled-out in this manner. We contemplate that it may have been a mistake in calculating the proposed transfer.**
- **Board will need to raise licensure fees:** With the disproportionate proposed cut, the Board will need to raise licensure fees much sooner to make-up for the loss in reserves. **This means that occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants will soon be paying higher licensure fees. This seems unfair as the amount of the proposed fund balance appears to be a mistake.**

- **Reserves Are Needed for Implementation of New Initiatives:** The Board is planning to undergo two major initiatives:
 - **Implementation of Occupational Therapy Compact:** The Maryland General Assembly adopted the Occupational Therapy Compact in 2021. As the Compact has now been adopted by enough states, we are entering into the implementation phase. Resources may be needed for implementation including updates to the Board’s IT systems; and
 - **Moving Office Spaces:** The Board’s offices have been on the campus of Spring Grove. The space is affordable, but the Board is being forced to move because the offices are no longer habitable because of black mold. The Board is likely to need to pay for commercial space. With the closure of the State Office Complex on Preston Street in Baltimore, there is no longer state office space available.

- **Funding Behavioral Health Services through Provider Fees is Not Good Policy:** MOTA fully supports ensuring there is sufficient funding for the Behavioral Health Administration. We think it is bad policy for services to be paid for by behavioral health providers. Behavioral health providers, including occupational therapy practitioners, are already stretched to the limit because of the health professional shortages. We believe that the resources needed for the Behavioral Health Administration should come from the State’s general fund, as it should be a shared responsibility to support these services. We would also note that it also seems problematic to occupational therapy providers, as occupational therapists are not always recognized as part of the behavioral health provider team by the State’s policies.

Please reverse the proposed fund balance transfer for the Board of Occupational Therapy Practice. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.

¹ <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/pubs/budgetfiscal/2025fy-budget-docs-operating-M00B0104-MDH-Health-Professional-Boards-and-Commissions.pdf>