



DATE: March 28, 2024 **COMMITTEE:** House Health and Government Operations
BILL NO: Senate Bill 795
BILL TITLE: Health Occupations – Practice Audiology – Definition
POSITION: Support

Kennedy Krieger Institute supports Senate Bill 795 - Health Occupations – Practice Audiology – Definition.

Bill Summary:

Senate Bill 795 alters the definition of “practice audiology” in the Maryland Health Occupations Statute. Kennedy Krieger agrees with the bill as amended by the Senate and endorses the clarification of the scope of practice for audiologists.

Background:

Kennedy Krieger Institute is dedicated to improving the lives of children and young adults with developmental, behavioral, cognitive, and physical challenges. Kennedy Krieger’s services include inpatient, outpatient, school-based, and community-based programs. Over 27,000 individuals receive services annually at Kennedy Krieger. We employ more than 2,600 persons who play a vital role in our mission to transform the lives of children with disorders of the brain.

At Kennedy Krieger, our audiologists offer a wide variety of evaluations and services to assess and treat a child’s ability to hear and process sounds at all stages of their development. Our comprehensive approach includes collaboration with specialists in speech language pathology, developmental medicine, and other disciplines to provide specialized care tailored to each patient’s unique set of needs.

Rationale:

The American Academy of Audiology (AAA) defines audiologists as, “independent practitioners who, by virtue of their postgraduate education, training, and license to practice, engage in the profession of audiology.” While audiology is one of the youngest health careers it is rapidly progressing; new technologies are developed, implemented, and improved at an accelerated pace. Along with these technological developments, the skillset and requirements of audiology practitioners have grown to match. To become an audiologist, a person must attend an accredited clinical doctoral program, where they obtain education and several hundred hours of hands-on supervised training.

An audiologist’s primary objective is to improve a person’s quality of life by preventing, identifying, diagnosing disorders of hearing and balance, as well as providing evidence-based, nonmedical treatments of those disorders. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) defines the audiologist’s scope of practice as “complex, dynamic, and constantly evolving.” ASHA acknowledges the audiologist’s roles in patient care including “clinician, educator, consultant, researcher, and administrator.” This care can encompass a number of services such as the prescribing, ordering, and/or management of amplification devices such as hearing aids, osseointegrated devices, and cochlear implants; cerumen management; and/or the removal of foreign bodies from the external auditory canal, in addition to many other skills which are defined as alterations under the proposed bill.

The proposed changes delineated in HB 464 would allow the legal interpretation of an audiologist’s **scope of practice (SOP) to better reflect a current and comprehensive description of the profession**, such as those defined in AAA’s and ASHA’s SOP documentation (see below for references). This alteration can support an audiologist in their ability to provide equitable and culturally responsive person-centered care as a licensed professional of the state of Maryland.

Kennedy Krieger Institute requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 795.

References

1. American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2018). *Scope of practice in audiology* [Scope of Practice]. Available from www.asha.org/policy/.
2. American Academy of Audiology. (2023). *Scope of Practice*. Available from <https://www.audiology.org/practice-guideline/scope-of-practice/>.