



March 11, 2024

The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee
Maryland General Assembly
Room 241
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: HB 1476

Dear Delegate Pena-Melnyk:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), I write to share concerns with and offer proposed amendments to HB 1476, which would require the Governor to appoint licensed audiologists to the State Board of Examiners for Audiologists, Hearing Aid Dispensers, Speech-Language Pathologists, and Music Therapists from a list submitted by the Maryland Academy of Audiology rather than by the Board itself.

ASHA is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 234,000 members, certificate holders, and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists (SLPs); speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology assistants; and students. Over 4,200 ASHA members reside in Maryland.¹

We are concerned that the bill as written would allow only the Maryland Academy of Audiology to submit names for appointment of audiologists to the Board of Examiners for Audiologists, Hearing Aid Dispensers, Speech-Language Pathologists and Music Therapists. As an ASHA-affiliated state association, the Maryland Speech-Language-Hearing Association (MSHA) represents the professions of audiology and speech-language pathology in Maryland, including the over 350 ASHA certified audiologists and 3,800 SLPs who work in the state. We ask that MSHA be given an equal opportunity to submit names for appointment of audiologists to the Board and suggest the following language with proposed additions underlined and deletions in **red**:

(5) (i) Subject to subparagraph (iii) of this paragraph, the Governor shall appoint the audiologist members, with the advice of the Secretary, from **a lists** submitted to the Secretary and the Governor by the [Board] MARYLAND ACADEMY OF AUDIOLOGY AND THE MARYLAND SPEECH-LANGUAGE-HEARING ASSOCIATION.

We also request an amendment to the bill that would allow MSHA, as the only organization that represents SLPs in the state, to submit the same to the Governor. ASHA suggests the following language:

- (i) Subject to subparagraph (iii) of this paragraph, the Governor shall appoint the speech-language pathologist members, with the advice of the Secretary, from a list submitted to the Secretary and the Governor by the Maryland Speech-Language-Hearing Association.
- (ii) The number of names on the list shall be at least 3 times the number of vacancies.
- (iii) For each speech-language pathology vacancy, the Board shall notify all licensed speech-language pathologists in the State of the vacancy to solicit nominations to fill the vacancy.

Thank you for considering ASHA's proposed amendments to HB 1476. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Susan Adams, ASHA's director of state legislative and regulatory affairs, at sadams@asha.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tena L. McNamara". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T" and "M".

Tena L. McNamara, AuD, CCC-A/SLP
2024 ASHA President

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2023). *Maryland* [Quick Facts]. <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/advocacy/state-fliers/maryland-state-flyer.pdf>