



DATE: March 3, 2026 COMMITTEE: Senate Finance
BILL NO: Senate Bill 917
BILL TITLE: Health Occupations - Practice of Audiology - Definition
POSITION: Support

Kennedy Krieger Institute supports Senate Bill 917 - Health Occupations - Practice of Audiology - Definition

Bill Summary:

Senate Bill 917 alters the definition of “practice audiology.”

Background:

Kennedy Krieger provides specialized services to patients nationally and internationally. 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.

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. This legislation aims to remove barriers (such as needing external referrals for basic, non-invasive, or imaging tests) allowing for faster diagnosis and treatment of conditions like dizziness or hearing loss.

The proposed changes delineated in SB 917 would allow the legal interpretation of an audiologist’s **scope of practice (SOP) to be expanded to include ordering and performing specific diagnostic imaging and in-office procedures for auditory or vestibular conditions, excluding surgery**, 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 requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 917.

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/>.