

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 795

(Senator Gile, *et al.*)

Finance

Health and Government Operations

Health Occupations - Practice Audiology - Definition

This bill specifies that “practice audiology” means to (1) evaluate, diagnose, manage, and treat auditory or vestibular conditions in the human ear; (2) prescribe, order, sell dispense, or fit hearing aids to an individual for the correction or relief of a condition for which hearing aids are worn; (3) prescribe, order, sell, dispense, or externally fit a sound processor to an osseointegrated device for the correction or relief of a condition for which osseointegrated devices are worn; and (4) prescribe, order, sell dispense, or externally fit a “sound processor” (a nonsurgical, external unit that attaches to an internal osseointegrated device or cochlear implant) to a cochlear implant for the correction or relief of a condition for which cochlear implants are worn. The bill also specifies what “practice audiology” includes and does not include.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The State Board of Examiners for Audiologists, Hearing Aid Dispensers, Speech-Language Pathologists, and Music Therapists can update regulations with existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: “Practice audiology” includes the (1) conducting of health screenings; (2) removal of a foreign body from the external auditory canal that is not impacted to the point it requires anesthesia; (3) removal of cerumen from the external auditory canal that

is not impacted to the point it requires anesthesia; (4) ordering of cultures and bloodwork testing as it relates to the auditory or vestibular conditions in the human ear; (5) ordering and performing of in-office nonradiographic scanning or imaging of the external auditory canal; and (6) ordering of radiographic imaging as it relates to the auditory or vestibular conditions in the human ear.

“Practice audiology” does not include (1) surgery using an instrument, including a laser, scalpel, needle, cautery, a cryoprobe, or a suture, in which human tissue is cut, burned, vaporized, removed, or otherwise permanently altered by mechanical means, laser, ionizing radiation, ultrasound, or other means; (2) osseointegrated device surgery; (3) cochlear implant surgery; or (4) the preparation, operation, or performance of radiographic imaging.

Current Law: Generally, an individual must be licensed by the State Board of Examiners for Audiologists, Speech-Language Pathologists, and Music Therapists to provide hearing aid services, practice audiology, practice speech-language pathology, or practice music therapy in Maryland.

As updated by Chapter 60 and 61 of 2023, “practice audiology” means to (1) apply the principals, methods, and procedures of measurement, prediction, evaluation, testing, counseling, consultation, and instruction that relate to the development and disorders of hearing, vestibular functions, and related language and speech disorders to prevent or modify the disorders or assist individuals in hearing and auditory and related skills for communication and (2) prescribing, ordering, selling, dispensing, or fitting of a hearing aid to an individual for the correction or relief of a condition for which such devices are worn.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: HB 464 (Delegate Martinez, *et al.*) - Health and Government Operations.

Information Source(s): Maryland Association of County Health Officers; Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland School for the Deaf; Maryland Department of Health; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 21, 2024
rh/jc Third Reader - March 22, 2024
Revised - Amendment(s) - March 22, 2024

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