

My name is Kathy Cochran. I am the mother of a 14 year old autistic son, Joshua, a wife of a retired Air Force officer, and also a Maryland licensed Registered Pharmacist. In June of 2008, my 2 and ½ year old son was diagnosed with autism. On that date, we began a lifelong journey to find out how to help him and provide every opportunity for early intervention. At the time of diagnosis, my son was non verbal and had many behavioral and sensory processing needs. In his short lifetime, Joshua has spent thousands of hours in behavioral, occupational, speech, physical, psychological and music therapy. Each therapy provided differing techniques with one common goal, rewiring his brain. I found that music therapy has helped him improve his attention, be more open to social situations, decreased his anxiety levels and, in conjunction with occupational therapy, has helped him improve the use of his sensory debilitated hands. Today, I am happy to report that Joshua is main-streamed into the public-school system, has straight A's, is an active swimmer and just won the lead part in his musical theater workshop's production of Aladdin at Children's Theater of Annapolis. The field of music therapy has changed my son's life for the better and has gained my respect as a fellow medical profession.

With that said, why are music therapists not licensed or recognized by the state of Maryland as other medical professionals are? As I said before, I am a licensed Pharmacist. I completed a rigorous Pharmacy degree from a University program, as do music therapists. My pharmacy degree required years of professional curriculum classes and internships, as do music therapists. After graduation, Pharmacists are required to take national exams as well as state exams to practice in the state of Maryland. Right now, music therapists practicing in the

state only have the opportunity to earn a national license. As a Pharmacist, I am also required to attain 30 hours of continuing education every two years to renew my license and keep current on new medications as well as new laws that may affect my ability to practice pharmacy. These standards set forth by federal and state regulation not only keep me knowledgeable as a pharmacist, but they also provide safety for patients. I ask, how many of you would want your heart or diabetic medication filled by a pharmacist who doesn't have to comply with industry standards? The same can be said for music therapists. Like Ms. Briggs articulated, they often times work with the most vulnerable members of society. Are your constituents not entitled to the same safety standards too? Music therapists are here asking for these standards and for the state of Maryland to step forward and allow for these medical professionals to be certified and recognized by the state for safety, professional, and medical/insurance reasons. I mention insurance, because in my profession I am all too familiar with the fight for goods and services to be covered. Contrary to what the other side will tell you, I have personally spent hours on the phone for several years trying to get my son's therapy covered by our insurance. Our insurance company said that they would cover Music Therapy sessions only if the therapists had a state license. So, for 10 years, we have been paying thousands of dollars for our son to have Music Therapy. Not everyone in your districts have the ability to pay for music therapy. Not having a licensure through the state is a true roadblock for those who need Music Therapy the most. It's time this roadblock is removed and allow music therapists to be acknowledged and officially recognized by the state of Maryland.