



Maryland Academy of Audiology

P.O. Box 710

Parkville, MD 21234

<http://maaudiology.org/>

February 8, 2021

Chair Shane Pendergrass
House Office Building, Room 241
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB732 Health Care Practitioners – Telehealth – Out-of-State Health Care Practitioners
Position: **SUPPORT**

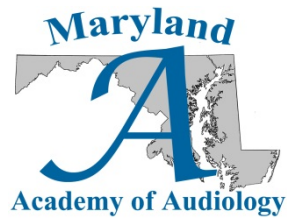
Madam Chair Pendergrass, Madam Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, and Committee Members,

The shortage of healthcare providers in the United States has been rapidly highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, patients who reside in Maryland and obtain hearing and balance healthcare outside the state—perhaps due to their place of employment, location of the nearest practice, or preference of provider – have had difficulties obtaining audiology services due to state licensure law.

By virtue of education and licensure, Audiologists are the most qualified professionals to manage hearing and balance disorders. An Audiologist is a state-licensed professional who specializes in evaluating, diagnosing, treating, and managing patients with hearing loss, tinnitus, and balance (vestibular) disorders. Audiologists work in a variety of settings: private practice offices, hospitals, medical centers, out-patient clinics, public and private schools, universities (teaching and research), regulatory agencies, large-scale research centers, rehabilitation centers, skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, the Veterans Administration, and the U.S. Military. Audiologists work closely with federal, state, and private third-party payers to optimize coverage of services provided for the evaluation and treatment of the patients in their care.

The MAA represents the 450+ licensed audiologists who practice in the state of Maryland, and the patients they serve. The MAA's goal is to enhance the ability of members to achieve career and practice objectives by fostering professional autonomy, providing quality continuing education, and increasing public and consumer awareness of hearing and balance disorders and the value of audiologic services.

The MAA supports HB732 which, when passed, will allow patients access to their preferred provider, regardless of the audiologist's state of licensure. Telehealth will ensure patients have more access to hearing and balance healthcare. Rural areas of Maryland have few providers, and busy practices everywhere have waiting lists that can be three weeks or longer to obtain hearing and balance



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healthcare. With this legislation, patients can choose to find a provider outside the state of Maryland and continue to receive services while located in the state of Maryland.

Thank you for support of this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sofia Roller". The script is fluid and cursive.

Sofia Roller, Au.D.

President, Maryland Academy of Audiology