

HB0830: State Board of Examiners for Audiologists, Hearing Aid Dispensers, Speech-Language Pathologists, and Music Therapists - Physician Members - Repeal

Sponsor: Delegate Robbyn Lewis

Chair Shane E. Pendergrass
House Health & Government Operations Committee
House Office Building, Room 241
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: HB0830 State Board of Examiners for Audiologists, Hearing Aid Dispensers, Speech-Language Pathologists, and Music Therapists- Physician Members- Repeal

Position: SUPPORT

Leslie Papel, Au.D. Testimony

February 24, 2022

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

My name is Leslie Papel and I have been practicing audiology for 40 years, the last 30 in my private practice Healing Services Baltimore. On behalf of the Maryland Academy of Audiology, we are pleased to be working with Delegate Robbyn Lewis to update the Maryland Board of Examiners for Audiologists, Hearing Aid Dispensers, Speech-Language Pathologists, and Music Therapists (Board of Examiners) membership.

Historically, physicians, especially otorhinolaryngologists- or as we often refer to them, ENTs, are male. In fact, the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) reported that almost 83% of ENTs are male (82.9%).¹ On the flip side, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association reports that 86% of audiologists and 96% of speech-language pathologists are female.² As a provider of audiology services since 1982, I have never hesitated to reach out for a medical opinion when necessary as the Board of Examiners obligates me to be ethical and care for my patients. Although I have been active in the State since I started practicing, I do not know exactly when the physicians were placed on the Board. However, with two mandated physicians on the BOE, and the audiology professionals primarily being female, I as well as some of my colleagues question if the presence of the ENT is to provide oversight rather than participation.

Audiologists, by virtue of their education, are the entry point to hearing and balance healthcare and earn an 8-year clinical doctorate degree from an accredited university. In the late 2000s, the Maryland statute was updated to reflect this enhanced level of education. Speech-Language Pathologists have been required to hold a master's degree since 1970 and are the entry point for speech and language services. Speech-language Pathologists also supervise Speech-Language Pathology Assistants on a

¹ <https://www.aamc.org/data-reports/workforce/interactive-data/active-physicians-sex-and-specialty-2017>

² <https://leader.pubs.asha.org/doi/10.1044/leader.AAG.24082019.32>

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regular basis. Both professions are licensed by the State of Maryland and maintain their proficiency with continuing education in the profession. As with other boards, we police ourselves and the presence of two ENT's is not warranted. No other medical professional board: nursing, nurse practitioners, physical therapists, etc. mandates that a physician be on their board.

The removal of physicians from this Board of Examiners has been a long time coming. My colleague is going to provide more details about the history that had built to this point in time. Thank you for your time consideration and to Delegate Lewis for sponsoring this legislation. I ask for a favorable committee report on HB0830.