

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
Mary Casper, M.A., CCC-SLP Testimony

February 24, 2022

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

My name is Mary Casper and I am a speech-language pathologist and the current Public Policy Director and President-Elect for the Maryland Speech-Language-Hearing Association. As my colleague mentioned, the MSHA represents the more than 4,200 licensed Speech-Language Pathologists in the State of Maryland. I am here in support of House Bill 830 and am 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.

My partners have been alluding to the Board of Examiners composition, and I'd like to elaborate on this. The Board of Examiners is comprised of three Audiologists, three Hearing Aid Dispensers, three Speech-Language Pathologists, two ear, nose, and throat (ENT) physicians/surgeons, and two consumer members.¹ Legislation passed in 2021 adds two Music Therapists this year.² The Board of Physicians is comprised 22 members: 15 physicians, 1 physician assistant, and 6 consumers. As you just heard, none of the Board of Examiners professionals are afforded reciprocity on the Board of Physicians. Further, Maryland has 19 other non-physician Boards, including dental, massage therapists, nursing, optometry, physical therapy, chiropractors, counselors and therapists, and social work, again **none** with physician members.

¹ <https://health.maryland.gov/boardsahs/Pages/about.aspx>

² <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/hb0233?ys=2021RS>

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Twenty-three states do not have any physicians on their audiology licensing boards. Of 51 states / jurisdictions that have licensing boards for speech-language pathology, 26 have positions for physicians, and 7 of the 26 have unfilled openings for physicians, unable to find physicians willing to serve. Maryland has often been viewed as being a leader in the professions of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology. The Board of Examiners does not display this leadership and rather suggests that we as Speech-Language Pathologists – fully licensed healthcare professionals - must be supervised. I implore you to update the Board’s membership and keep Maryland in the spotlight as a leader in our professions.

Thank you for your time consideration and to Delegate Lewis for sponsoring this legislation. I ask for a favorable committee report on HB0830.