
MARYLAND SOCIETY OF OTOLARYNGOLOGISTS

SUBJECT: Senate Bill 449 – Health Occupations – Practice Audiology – Definition
COMMITTEE: Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Melony Griffith, Chair
DATE: Tuesday, February 28, 2023
POSITION: Support with Amendment

The Maryland Society of Otolaryngologists (MSO) represents more than 300 physicians who live and practice in Maryland. Otolaryngologists are physicians who diagnose and treat the ear, nose, throat, and related structures of the head and neck; most commonly referred to as ear, nose, and throat specialists (ENTs).

Senate Bill 449 as introduced would expand the scope of services and procedures an audiologist can provide in Maryland. This would include allowing Audiologists to:

- (1)...ORDER, EVALUATE, DIAGNOSE, MANAGE, OR TREAT ANY AUDITORY OR VESTIBULAR CONDITION IN THE HUMAN EAR; AND
- (2) PRESCRIBE, ORDER, SELL, DISPENSE, OR FIT hearing aids OR OSSEO-INTEGRATED DEVICES TO AN INDIVIDUAL FOR THE CORRECTION OR RELIEF OF A CONDITION FOR WHICH HEARING AIDS OR OSSEO-INTEGRATED DEVICES ARE WORN.

The bill as drafted is broad and greatly expands an audiologist's scope of practice. The terms "...diagnose, manage [and] treat" are among the roles being added to the "practice of audiology. This terminology traditionally falls under the practice of medicine. When these terms are used in other health occupations they are limited or qualified by a requirement for a higher level of education and training within that specialty.

The medical disorders treated by our physicians are among the most common that afflict everyone, young and old. They include chronic ear infection, sinusitis, hearing loss (from gradual to sudden onset), swallowing disorders, hoarseness, dizziness, balance issues and head and neck cancer. These disorders and conditions while seemingly simple can often be complex and multi-factorial. Our member Otolologists diagnose and treat the conditions impacting the structure and function of the ear and auditory system. Our member Otorhinolaryngologists diagnose and treat disorders of the ears, nose, throat, and related structures of the head and neck.

In response to these concerns, the bill has been amended by the House Health and Government Operations Committee (attached). We understand that those same amendments will be introduced at this hearing. These amendments address our concerns with regard to the expansion of scope and aligns with the Audiologists' current scope under law and regulation.

Our foremost commitment is to deliver the best patient care and use best practices. We often work side by side with our Audiologists colleagues and together face the challenging conditions and disorders our patients present. **With these agreed to amendments we ask for a favorable report on Senate Bill 449.**

For further information please contact: Mark Dettelbach M.D. – President, madmd1964@yahoo.com

AMENDMENTS from the HOUSE HGO Reprint of House Bill 401:

The amendments below remove proposed language that would expand the scope of Audiologists practice:

1. Lines 15-16 STRIKE "~~ORDER, EVALUATE, DIAGNOSE, MANAGE, OR TREAT ANY AUDITORY OR VESTIBULAR CONDITION IN THE HUMAN EAR;~~"
2. Lines 19 and 21 STRIKE: "~~OR OSSEO-INTEGRATED DEVICES~~"

With these essential amendments MSO supports passage of this bill.

AMENDED BILL TEXT:

10 ~~(q)~~ ~~(r)~~ (q) [(1)] "Practice audiology" means to
[apply]:

11 (1) APPLY the principles, methods, and procedures of measurement,
12 prediction, evaluation, testing, counseling, consultation, and instruction that relate to the
13 development and disorders of hearing, vestibular functions, and related language and
14 speech disorders, to prevent or modify the disorders or assist individuals in hearing and
15 auditory and related skills for communication. ~~ORDER, EVALUATE, DIAGNOSE,~~
16 ~~MANAGE, OR TREAT ANY AUDITORY OR VESTIBULAR CONDITION IN THE HUMAN EAR;~~
17 AND

18 (2) ["Practice audiology" includes the fitting or selling of] PRESCRIBE,
19 ORDER, SELL, DISPENSE, OR FIT hearing aids ~~OR OSSEO-INTEGRATED DEVICES TO~~
20 AN INDIVIDUAL FOR THE CORRECTION OR RELIEF OF A CONDITION FOR WHICH
21 HEARING AIDS ~~OR OSSEO-INTEGRATED DEVICES~~ ARE WORN.