

February 27, 2024

Chair Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
Room 241
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: **HB 464** Health Occupations - Practice Audiology - Definition
Position: **SUPPORT**

Madam Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and Committee Members, Neuromod Devices is a global medical technology company founded to establish bimodal neuromodulation a new standard of care for tinnitus (ringing in the ears). **Neuromod USA Inc.** partners with Doctors of Audiology across the country to provide safe, efficacious tinnitus management and treatment to individuals.

Tinnitus is a sound heard in one or both ears that is not from an environmental source. According to the Hearing Health Foundation (HHF), tinnitus affects more than 48 million people in the United States and often coincides with hearing loss. In fact, 90% of tinnitus cases have an underlying hearing loss.¹ Besides hearing loss, ear infections, head/neck injuries, medications, blood vessel disorders, temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorders, and head/neck tumors can cause tinnitus.² Individuals with bothersome tinnitus may also present with poor sleep hygiene, communication difficulties, anxiety, depression, irritability, and difficulties concentrating.³

Tinnitus management and treatment has been available, primarily through audiologists, since the 1990s with the introduction of Tinnitus Retraining Therapy.⁴ New research and current technology provides more options for individuals with bothersome tinnitus than any other time. Tinnitus evaluation, diagnosis, management, and treatment for individuals with bothersome tinnitus can be very extensive and rewarding. Audiologists who specialize in tinnitus have a significant foundation of auditory and medical information and serve as a guide to improve patient's quality of life. Due to the length of time for management/treatment of tinnitus and the absence of a prescription medication, physicians are not often the provider of tinnitus service, other than ruling out a medical cause (e.g., hypertension).

Audiologists specialize in auditory and vestibular disorders. Since 2007, audiologists earn a clinical doctorate degree (Au.D.) from an accredited university. Audiology didactic

¹ <https://hearinghealthfoundation.org/hearing-loss-tinnitus-statistics>

² <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/tinnitus/symptoms-causes/syc-20350156>

³ <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/tinnitus-and-quality-of-life>

⁴ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25862626/>

program accreditation requires multiple course work in the identification (evaluation and diagnosis) and prevention (management and treatment) of tinnitus.

HB 464 modernizes the audiology practice definition to reflect the didactic and clinical education of audiologists. Evaluation, Diagnosis, Management, and Treatment of auditory conditions in the human ear includes tinnitus. Since audiologists are the primary provider of tinnitus services, the Maryland Statute language needs to be modernized to reflect the level of education in their professional specialty. Additionally, screening procedures (non-diagnostic, pass/fail procedures) are imperative to determine if an individual with tinnitus requires a referral (management) to another healthcare provider (e.g., dentists for a TMJ evaluation).

On behalf of Neuromod, I urge you to support HB 464 to modernize the Audiology Practice Statute and better access and affordability to licensed Maryland audiologists.

Sincerely,

Eric Timm

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