

February 26, 2025

Chair Pamela Beidle
Finance Committee
3 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: **SB 641- Health Insurance – Required Coverage – Hearing Aids**

Position: **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

Madam Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Maryland Academy of Audiology (MAA), I am writing to **support with amendments** SB 641, Hearing Aids for Adult Coverage.

One of the Maryland Academy of Audiology's (MAA) core principles is accessibility to hearing (audiologic) and balance (vestibular) healthcare. Hearing Aid Dispensers (HADs) in Maryland obtain a 2-year education degree and clinical training hours to fit and order suitable hearing instruments, including prescription hearing aids.¹

The amendments offered to SB 641 eliminate the MAA's concerns of HADs working with a population outside their education and training (minors/pediatrics). Additionally, the change in the semantic language from 'prescribe' to 'order' mimics the Health Occupations (H.O.) Statute language and will confirm that HADs can order, fit, sell, and dispense prescription hearing aids without any barriers of a prescription. These amendments grant Marylanders the ability to choose their hearing aid provider (audiologist or hearing aid dispenser), when hearing aid coverage benefits are available from a third party payor.

The MAA represents more than 525 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 (CE), and increasing public and consumer awareness of hearing and balance disorders and the value of audiologic services.

¹ Maryland Statute H.O. 2-101. Available:

<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Laws/StatuteText?article=gho§ion=2-101&enactments=false>



MARYLAND ACADEMY OF
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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.

SB 641 provides more access and affordability to adults to obtain hearing aid treatment for hearing loss by adding Hearing Aid Dispensers as eligible providers. I ask for a ***favorable with amendments*** committee report on SB 641.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alicia D.D. Spoor, Au.D." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alicia D.D. Spoor, Au.D.
Doctor of Audiology
Legislative Chair, MAA