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Position: FAV

**SB 88 State Board of Examiners for Audiologists, Hearing Aid Dispensers,
Speech-Language Pathologists, and Music Therapists - Authority to Issue
Limited Licenses to Practice Music Therapy**

Finance Committee

February 3, 2026

Position: FAVORABLE

The Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as behavioral health). We appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of Senate Bill 88.

SB 88 authorizes the State Board of Examiners for Audiologists, Hearing Aid Dispensers, Speech-Language Pathologists, and Music Therapists to issue a limited license to practice music therapy. The purpose of the limited license is to allow an individual to practice music therapy while completing the requirements for full licensure.

Data from an [alarming 2024 state assessment](#) of Maryland's behavioral health workforce highlights an escalating crisis in access to care. According to the report¹, which was completed pursuant to legislation the General Assembly passed in 2023 ([SB 283](#)/[HB 418](#)), today's workforce of 34,600 behavioral health professionals is 34% smaller than necessary to meet current demand, requiring an immediate influx of 18,200 individuals. An additional 14,600 workers will be required to replace those leaving the field by 2028, requiring a doubling of current capacity in just the next few years to keep pace with need.

The 2024 report outlined six strategies for addressing Maryland's behavioral health workforce crisis, including the promotion of timely and effective licensing. According to the report:

"Challenges with the licensing and certification process was identified as a significant issue by both staff and employers in Maryland. This has a direct impact on the availability of services, as there are less licensed clinicians, as well as disincentivizing individuals from entering the profession or attaining licensure."

The General Assembly has taken several important steps in recent years to streamline the delivery of quality behavioral health care and bolster the state's behavioral health workforce, but we are not out of this crisis yet. We must employ every strategy at our disposal to address the unmet need, and improving our licensing practices is one of those strategies.

SB 88 will help ensure Marylanders can access care when and where needed. For this reason, MHAMD supports this bill and urges a favorable report.

¹ *Investing in Maryland's Behavioral Health Talent*. Maryland Health Care Commission. October 2024.
https://mhcc.maryland.gov/mhcc/pages/plr/plr/documents/2024/md_bh_workforce_rpt_SB283.pdf

For more information, please contact Dan Martin at (410) 978-8865

Maryland Catholic Conference_FAV_SB88.pdf

Uploaded by: Diane Arias

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 3, 2026

Senate Bill 88

**State Board of Examiners for Audiologists, Hearing Aid Dispensers, Speech-
Language Pathologists, and Music Therapists - Authority to Issue Limited
Licenses to Practice Music Therapy
Senate Finance Committee**

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 88 authorizes the State Board of Examiners for Audiologists, Hearing Aid Dispensers, Speech-Language Pathologists, and Music Therapists to issue a limited license to practice music therapy; providing the purpose of the limited license is to permit an individual to practice music therapy while completing certain licensing requirements; and allowing a licensee with a limited license to practice music therapy under the supervision of a fully licensed music therapist.

Establishing a limited license for music therapy allows qualified applicants to begin practicing under supervision while completing full licensure requirements, increasing the number of trained music therapists available to serve community needs.¹ This pathway removes unnecessary delays in workforce entry while maintaining professional oversight, ensuring safe and effective care. For individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities—who often face long waitlists and limited access to specialized therapies—this expanded workforce is critical.

Music therapy offers individualized, evidence-based interventions that support communication, emotional regulation, cognitive development, and sensory integration.² For individuals with limited verbal abilities, music provides a dignified and effective means of expression and connection. Structured activities such as listening, singing, instrument play, and relaxation

¹ <https://utahparentcenter.org/music-therapy-benefits/>

² <https://www.samitivejhospitals.com/article/detail/music-therapy-development-communication-support>

techniques are tailored to each person's strengths and challenges, supporting emotional, psychological, and social well-being.

By allowing supervised practice through a limited license, the State promotes equitable access to life-enhancing therapeutic services while upholding high professional standards. This approach affirms the dignity of every person by recognizing their right to timely, appropriate care—particularly for individuals with intellectual disabilities who benefit profoundly from consistent, personalized therapeutic support.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **SB 88**.

Thank you for your consideration.

Senator Gile Written Testimony_SB88.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Mike Cardozo

Position: FAV

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of SB 88 - State Board of Examiners for Audiologists, Hearing Aid Dispensers, Speech–Language Pathologists, and Music Therapists – Authority to Issue Limited Licenses to Practice Music Therapy

Madame Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, and fellow Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

SB 88 authorizes the State Board of Examiners for Audiologists, Hearing Aid Dispensers, Speech–Language Pathologists, and Music Therapists to issue a limited license to practice music therapy. The purpose of this limited license is to allow qualified individuals to practice under supervision while completing the final examination requirement for full licensure.

This bill addresses a narrow but important gap in current law. While the Board already issues limited licenses for several other regulated professions under its jurisdiction, music therapists currently lack a comparable pathway. SB 88 brings music therapy into alignment with the Board’s existing licensure framework.

Background

Under current law, individuals seeking full licensure as music therapists must complete all educational and clinical training requirements and obtain board certification. However, applicants who have completed all requirements except the certification examination are not currently eligible to practice, even under supervision.

As a result, otherwise qualified individuals face delays in entering the workforce, and patients and care settings lose access to needed services during this interim period.

Existing Law

The State Board already has authority to issue limited licenses to other professionals it regulates, including audiologists and speech–language pathologists. These limited licenses allow supervised practice while individuals complete remaining licensure requirements and ensure that the Board maintains regulatory oversight during that period.

Music therapy is the only discipline under the Board’s jurisdiction that does not currently have access to a limited licensure pathway.

Solution

SB 88 authorizes the Board to issue a limited license to practice music therapy under clearly defined conditions.

Specifically, the bill:

- Allows an applicant who meets all licensure requirements except the certification examination to receive a limited license;
- Requires that limited licensees practice only under the supervision of a fully licensed music therapist;
- Limits the duration of a limited license to one year, with the option for a single one-year renewal; and
- Ensures that individuals who do not obtain full licensure within two years must wait a minimum of one year before reapplying.
- This approach promotes workforce entry while preserving patient safety and maintaining the Board's ability to enforce the Practice Act.

Fiscal Impact

Per the Fiscal and Policy Note, the Board can issue limited licenses using existing budgeted resources. License and renewal fees are not anticipated to meaningfully impact special fund revenues, and there is no anticipated impact on local governments or small businesses.

Closing

SB 88 is a measured and responsible update to Maryland's licensure framework. It improves consistency across the Board's regulated professions, supports workforce development, and ensures that appropriate supervision and regulatory oversight remain in place.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 88.

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Uploaded by: State of Maryland (MD)

Position: FAV



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D., Secretary

Board of Examiners for Audiologists,
Hearing Aid Dispensers, Speech-Language
Pathologists & Music Therapists
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2026 SESSION POSITION PAPER

BILL NO: SB 88

COMMITTEE: Finance

POSITION: Support

TITLE: State Board of Examiners for Audiologists, Hearing Aid Dispensers, Speech-Language Pathologists, and Music Therapists – Authority to Issue Limited Licenses to Practice Music Therapy

BILL ANALYSIS: SB 88 proposes to authorize the State Board of Examiners for Audiologists, Hearing Aid Dispensers, Speech–Language Pathologists, and Music Therapists (the “Board”) to issue a limited license to practice music therapy.

POSITION AND RATIONALE: The Board supports SB 88.

The proposed bill will provide further consistency throughout the Board. Each of the Board’s disciplines currently offer both full and limited licensure. Full supervision is in place during the entire period of limited licensure, allowing for a thorough and accountable training experience.

Most importantly, in cases of Practice Act violations, disciplinary action can only be enforced to existing license holders. Therefore, limited licensure provides the necessary protections for the citizens of our State.

For the above stated reasons, the Board respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 88.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Should you require any further information, please contact Keena Stephenson, Executive Director, at keena.stephenson1@maryland.gov or (443) 832-0597, or Lillian Reese, Legislative Liaison, at lillian.reese@maryland.gov, or 443-794-4757.

The opinion of the Board expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect that of the Department of Health or the Administration.