
MARYLAND SOCIETY OF OTOLARYNGOLOGISTS

Testimony on behalf of the Maryland Society of Otolaryngologists

In Opposition to

House Bill 504—State Board of Examiners for Audiologists, Hearing Aid Dispensers, Speech-Language Pathologists, and Music Therapists—Physician Members--Repeal

February 11, 2026

House Health Committee

The Maryland Society of Otolaryngologists (MSO) represents more than 300 physicians who live and practice in Maryland. Otolaryngologists are physicians who treat the ear, nose, throat, and related structures of the head and neck; most commonly referred to as ear, nose, and throat specialists (ENTs). The medical disorders treated by our physicians are among the most common that afflict all Americans, young and old. They include chronic ear infection, sinusitis, snoring and sleep apnea, hearing loss, allergies and hay fever, swallowing disorders, nosebleeds, hoarseness, dizziness, and head and neck cancer. Otolaryngologists diagnose and treat disorders of the ears, nose, throat, and related structures of the head and neck. Our foremost commitment is to deliver the best patient care. We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on House Bill 504.

House Bill 504 alters the membership of the State Board of Audiologists, Hearing Aid Dispensers, Speech-Language Pathologists and Music Therapists by removing the two physician members. We are opposed to removing these members as they serve an important role on the Board. During a time when provider collaboration and inclusive health care delivery models are emphasized and encouraged, maintaining physician representation on the Board makes sense. The physician members provide direct access for ENTs and other physicians in the community to bring forward collaborative care delivery models that may need regulatory and policy action at the Board level. ENTs work closely and collaboratively with audiologists, speech-language pathologists and hearing aid dispensers, and the Board should continue to reflect that collaborative landscape.

It is important to remember that the physician members of the Board are silent members. They neither drive policy, nor do they comment on scope of practice proposals. They merely provide advice and feedback, as needed, which is an important role given how often these providers work together on a regular basis. The current board make-up certainly reflects the spirit of collaboration across multi-specialties.

A number of states currently maintain physician representation on their Boards of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathologists, including near-by jurisdictions like Virginia, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island. In addition, physician representation on other Maryland health occupations Boards is not unique. Physician representatives serve in similar roles for athletic trainers, naturopaths, perfusionists, physician assistants, and more.

The mission statement of the State board is “to enhance the quality of hearing and speech health care provided to the citizens of Maryland.” We believe there is an important role there for ENTs. For this reason, we are opposed to House Bill 504.

