

April 24, 2024

Sent via email eric.luedtke@maryland.gov

The Honorable Wes Moore
Governor
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Veto Request: HB 464/SB 795 – Health Occupations – Practice Audiology – Definition

Dear Governor Moore:

On behalf of MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in Maryland, we write to request that you veto House Bill 464 and Senate Bill 795 – Health Occupations – Practice Audiology – Definition.

This legislation vastly expands the scope of practice of audiologists by allowing them to perform medical acts that are currently reserved for physicians. At present, “practice audiology” means to “apply the principles, methods, and procedures of measurement, prediction, evaluation, testing, counseling, consultation and instruction that relate to the development and disorders of hearing, vestibular functions, and related language and speech disorders, to prevent or modify the disorders or assist individuals in hearing and auditory related skills for communication....” Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. § 2-101(q). This legislation would increase the breadth and depth of the practice of audiology by allowing an audiologist to “evaluate, diagnose, manage, and treat” any auditory or vestibular condition in the human ear. This includes infections, tumors, chronic hearing loss, and potentially other abnormalities. Equally troubling, the legislation expressly includes the “conducting of health screenings” in the practice of audiology, which are undefined and without boundary. This allows an audiologist to perform *general* health screenings, which should be reserved for a primary care practitioner with proper education and training.

Indeed, the reason for audiologists having the current scope of practice is due to their training and education. Audiologists obtain 4 years of graduate level education, 1 year of training, and a total of 1,820 patient care hours. Contrast this with an otolaryngologist (ear, nose, and throat physician), who obtains not only 4 years of graduate level education, but also 5-7 years of residency/fellowship and a total of 12,000 to 16,000 patient care hours. A physician receives far more extensive training than an audiologist and is best able to diagnose and treat a wide range of conditions related to the ear or which manifest in the ear. Otolaryngologists are also able to

identify when there is a larger and more serious health issue occurring with an individual. This legislation, however, would permit audiologists to provide care beyond their education and training and would provide a more expansive scope of practice for audiologists than any of our sister states. See Va. Code Ann. § 54.1-2600; Del. Code Ann. Tit. 24, § 3702 (8); D.C. Mun. Regs. Tit. 17, § 7899; W. Va. Code §30-32-4. Maryland patients should and do expect greater qualifications and experience when it comes to identifying and treating serious maladies related to their hearing and overall health.

For these reasons, MedChi respectfully urges you to veto House Bill 464 and Senate Bill 795 – Health Occupations – Practice Audiology – Definition. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Ashton DeLong
General Counsel
MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society

cc: The Honorable Pam Beidle
The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk
The Honorable Dawn Gile
The Honorable Ashanti Martinez
Steve Wise, Esq., Schwartz, Metz, Wise & Kauffman, P.A.