

My name is Stephanie-Rose Briggs and I am an ASHA certified Speech-Language Pathologist and a new transplant to Maryland. Until I retired at the end of 2017, I had the privilege of working at the Elizabeth Lee Black School at the Barber National Institute in Erie, Pennsylvania. This school is an approved private school for children with the most severe mobility, intellectual and autistic challenges. The students receive specific services from teams made up of licensed and certified specialists across multiple disciplines. During my tenure there, we were given opportunities and education on how Music Therapy can assist skill development. The licensing of music therapists is now being addressed in Pennsylvania, as it is here in Maryland. This is an important step forward in responding to how we address therapeutic needs of a population that continues to require a wide range of services.

Human communication and music share common features. Both use pitch, rate, and rhythm. Singing requires breath control and the ability to adjust vocal volume, as does speaking. Speech, language and singing also share the fundamentals of pitch changes and memorization of words and phrases. Additionally, besides the cognitive fuel it brings to communication, movement and math skills, music adds pleasure and motivation to skill-learning.

We live in a country that has embraced the understanding that people with physical, emotional and mental needs should have the best services, accessibility and opportunities we can offer. Medical and educational professionals are required to have intentional and vigorous training in order to provide services. State Licensure ensures high standards of services are being met by professionals. The licensing of Music Therapists will give more health providers the opportunity to use the expertise of these important professionals.