



HB 1102 / SB 0766: State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists - Maryland Music Therapists Act - Maryland Speech-Language Hearing Association - OPPOSE

February 25, 2020

Senator Paul Pinsky
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland Speech Language Hearing Association to request your unfavorable report for SB 0766: State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists - Maryland Music Therapists Act

The Maryland Speech-Language-Hearing Association (MSHA) is a professional association comprised of speech/language pathologists and audiologists working in various settings across Maryland. MSHA advocates for people of all ages who have communication, speech, language, swallowing and/or hearing disabilities.

SB 0766 does not provide for a delineated scope of practice for music therapists. Without a specified scope of practice it is unclear as to how a code of ethics could be developed. We are writing in opposition to this bill for the above-mentioned reasons. In the past years when similar bills have been introduced, MSHA had attempted to work with the music therapists in order to help them achieve their goal of licensure. Specifically, we met with Niki Runge, Co-Chair, Maryland State Music Therapy Task Force Government Relations Chair, Maryland Association for Music Therapy in September of 2017 and engaged in email correspondence in May through September of 2018.

While we agree that licensure would be appropriate for music therapists, we are concerned with the lack of specificity in the bill submitted this year. In addition, previous iterations of this bill outlined a scope of practice for which we believe music therapists have not been appropriately

trained. One example is dysphagia (swallowing) therapy. The pre-service training outlined through the various course catalogs shared by the Maryland State Music Therapy Task Force do not show any evidence of required coursework in anatomy, physiology or the neurology that would impact safe and effective swallowing. Attempting to provide services in this area without adequate background knowledge could lead to significant endangerment for the patient.

We believe it would be important for the bill to outline either what is encompassed by the practice of music therapy or what is not provided by a music therapist. Without such guidance, it will be difficult for patients to determine an appropriate therapist for their particular needs.

Without the above concerns being addressed, we urge you to report unfavorably for SB 0766.

Sincerely,

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