



MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF MARYLAND

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**House Bill 7 State Board of Examiners for Audiologists, Hearing Aid Dispensers,
Speech-Language Pathologists, and Music Therapists - Authority to Issue
Limited Licenses to Practice Music Therapy**

Health Committee

February 4, 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 House Bill 7.

HB 7 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.

HB 7 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

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