

## History Lessons- Maryland OT's Road to Licensure- 1975-76

*This article was a collaborative effort of Jay Bullock, Charlotte Exner and Penny Kyler. There are many, many OT's and OTA's still active or retired in the state who are part of this history. Getting licensure truly was a group effort. It is impossible to make a list of those who helped with this effort and not inadvertently leave a name off the list so we have chosen not to attempt to recount all those that helped. You know who you are. We look back with thanks to the many that helped.*

In 1975 a group of occupational therapist and occupational therapy assistants decided the time was right to move forward with becoming a licensed health care profession in Maryland. How do you sell the idea of the need for licensure in 15-30 minutes to a group of legislators that did not have medical backgrounds, did not know what occupational therapy was and did not know how occupational therapy could benefit their constituents?

From the membership of MOTA two groups were formed. The President at that time, Donna Lucke knew this was going to be a large job, that MOTA needed money to accomplish this task and that all involved would have to become more politically astute. Would the membership provide the funds for this effort? Should we raise dues or have some sort of fundraising? Did anyone outside the Baltimore metro area care?

Charlotte Exner, then a staff therapist at the Kennedy Institute for Children and Jay Bullock, the new Chief of Rehabilitation Medicine, Osler I at Johns Hopkins Hospital led the groups. Exner was responsible for gauging the temperature of the OT community and getting everyone together. Bullock led the group to draft the proposed legislation and find sponsors. It was the major concern of MOTA, that if any **one** occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant who had a conflict with the concept of becoming licensed, openly spoke against the proposed bill during the Annapolis hearings, occupational therapy would not become a licensed profession in Maryland.

What did we have to do to succeed? As a professional group we had to reach out across the spectrum of occupational practice to others in our profession. We had to gain support from those in private practice, those who specialized in hand therapy, those who worked with children and those who worked in mental health. We had to be able to speak for those in Western Maryland and those on the eastern- shore of Maryland.

The committees met with anyone who wanted a meeting. The Executive Board of MOTA, at it's annual membership meeting invited Florence Kendall, PT to speak to the membership regarding the PT's efforts in getting licensed as well as about their concerns with occupational therapy becoming licensed. A ground swell of objectives came from the art therapy community, the physiatrists, the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of Maryland (Med. Chi) and others. Concern later arose from the orthotists and prosthetists and the therapeutic recreators. Members of the MOTA committee including Sandi Malone, Kay Price, met with all these groups. We met in the early morning hours and in the late evening. Occupational therapists from western Maryland and the Eastern Shore were enlisted to speak directly to their Maryland delegates or Senators. Whenever the

groups could arrange a meeting we went. We met at breakfast, lunch and dinner. We traveled the highways and by-ways of Maryland.

The major concern of the groups opposed to occupational therapy becoming a licensed profession in 1975-1976 was that in our proposed law, we did not include physicians' referrals, that our proposed scope of practice and definition of occupational therapy covered the many of the domains of practice of these groups.

Jay and Charlotte traveled the state gathering support from the occupational therapy community. Donna Lucke and Penny Kyler the outgoing and incoming Presidents of MOTA began the process of meeting with sponsors. Rosalie Abrams was identified as the potential Senate Sponsor and Torrey Brown was identified as the House sponsors. Abrams was a nurse, who's daughter Lissa J. Abrams was a new graduate in OT from Tufts. Brown, a physician was one of a few non-lawyers or business owners in the house in the House of Delegates. His concern was that he too did not know what occupational therapy was and therefore would not necessarily be a good sponsor.

The occupational therapist and occupational therapy assistants in Maryland in the 70's had a steep learning curve regarding politics. We had to go to fund -raisers for our various sponsors, learn about the backgrounds of each member of the house and senate committee who would hear the bill. Learn the backgrounds of the oppositions and their lobbyist. Many of us had to learn a new language and hone our public relations skills. Another occupational therapist with experience in business helped develop profiles of each member in the Maryland legislature.

The committee consulted with AOTA regarding the language and definition of occupational therapy. They offered to have a staff person come from the then Government and Legal Affairs Division to speak to the MOTA as well as testify in Annapolis in favor of the bill. AOTA staff helped MOTA in the language that defines the practice of occupational therapy. Occupational therapist and occupational therapy assistants around the state were enlisted to gather letters of support from consumers of OT services. Other occupational therapy practitioners such as Fran Silverstein, Janice Maynard, Truby LaGarde came up with a wonderful list of articulate consumers of OT services who came to Annapolis to testify. Many "OT" departments gathered together during their lunch hour to plan strategies to enlist the aid of physicians and consumers.

After the bill was passed Ruth B. Wiemer held a cocktail party at her home in Ruxton for all OT's to come and thank the many politicians who helped with this effort. The committee attended several fundraisers for approximately 2-3 years post the licensure effort to continue to thank the sponsors.

We achieved our results on the first try. The cost to the various committee members included new clothes, new car, lost opportunities to sleep, eat and recreate. This brief synopsis in no way can truly recreate the anguish, fun, camaraderie, cohesiveness and respect that way attained in this effort.



## SENATE OF MARYLAND

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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February 20, 1978

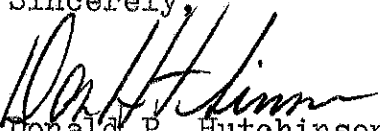
Mr. P. L. Kyler, President  
Maryland Occupational Therapy Association  
1221 Ramblewood Road  
Baltimore, Maryland 21212

Dear Mr. Kyler:

Thank you for your letter of February 9 concerning Senate Bill 538. I expect to support this bill should it reach the floor of the State Senate.

Prior to the convening of this session of the General Assembly, I had the pleasurable experience of meeting with Ms. Charlotte Exner to discuss the benefits this legislation would provide to the citizens of Maryland. Ms. Exner was extremely knowledgeable and convincing. I will support this legislation, in large part, because of my conversation with her.

Sincerely,

  
Donald P. Hutchinson

DPH/pk

GAYLORD LEE CLARK, M. D.  
5820 YORK ROAD  
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21212  
PHONE 301-435-1290

February 13, 1978

Senator McGurik  
Chairman Economic Affairs Committee

Re: Occupational Therapy Practice Act.  
Senate Bill - 538

Dear Senator McGurik:

I am unable to be present to give testimony in favor of the above Act because of previous commitments.

This Act is of great importance to us as surgeons who utilize the services of Occupational Therapists on a day to day basis. Their skills in performing therapy to restore function to the hands and extremities of patients with injury or disease has improved to a remarkable degree the results of our surgical work. The care rendered by the therapists relieves us from difficult and time consuming post operative management in order that we in turn may more effectively carry on our practice responsibilities.

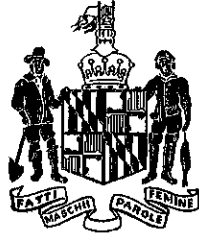
Besides working in the region of hand and extremity rehabilitation, our Occupational Therapists have extended their field of work to caring for and helping in the recovery of coronary and stroke patients. This work is very effective, and is not yet fully developed.

Another, and very significant contribution of the Occupational Therapists, has been in the broad field of arthritis with work simplification activities, joint protection instruction, splinting, and self help devices.

It is important to the general community and to the betterment of our patients that individuals working in the allied health field of Occupational Therapy be adequately trained, and correctly certified to render this form of treatment. I therefore support the Occupational Therapy Practice Act, Senate Bill #538, which I have read in its entirety.

Sincerely,

  
Gaylord L. Clark, M.D.



ROBERT E. STROBLE  
STATE SENATOR

## SENATE OF MARYLAND

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February 14, 1978

Mr. P.L. Kyler, President  
Maryland Occupational Therapy Association  
1221 Ramblewood Road  
Baltimore, Maryland 21212

Dear Mr. Kyler:

May I take this opportunity to thank you for your recent letter concerning Senate Bill 538 - Occupational Therapy Practice. Might I say at the outset that, while I am generally opposed to legislation which tends to license and over-regulate any field, I do think there is a definite need in this particular area for protection to the public.

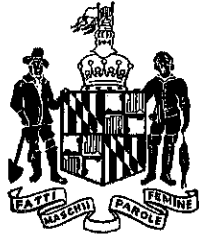
Senate Bill 538 is an extremely extensive bill. I do not purport to understand all of its ramifications at the present time. However, I am pleased to report to you that I am favorably disposed towards this particular piece of legislation and in all probability will vote for it.

It is always a pleasure hearing from you and serving you. If I may be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to call on me.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Stroble  
Senator

RES:beh



## SENATE OF MARYLAND

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

JULIAN L. LAPIDES  
STATE SENATOR  
THIRTY-NINTH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT  
BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

21 February 1978

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Ms. P. L. Kyler, President  
Maryland Occupational Therapy Assoc.  
1221 Ramblewood Road  
Baltimore, Maryland 21212

Dear Ms. Kyler:

Re: Senate Bill 538

Thank you for your recent letter expressing your views on Senate Bill 538 which would call for the licensure of Occupational Therapists. I agree with your position.

It is in the public's best interest to license all Occupational Therapists and very important that high quality care be provided to Marylanders. I concur with your views and believe that licensure is essential to insure maximum standards of care.

Thank you for taking the time to make your views known to me and please be assured of my support of this bill.

Sincerely yours,

  
Julian L. Lapidés

JLL:kmr

SB 538  
HB 935

February 20, 1978

On October 12, 1956 I was injured in a corn picker accident which left me a bilateral amputee just below each elbow.

I received artificial limbs - called prostheses about three months after the accident. For those three months I was dependent on others to help me with my activities of daily living. Those are tasks such as dressing, eating, bathing, and shaving. Not to mention I was unable to return to work and could not provide for my family.

Once I received my prostheses I required training which I got at Johns Hopkins Occupational Therapy Department. I was able to return to my crops that following spring. The process of rehabilitation was not completed yet.

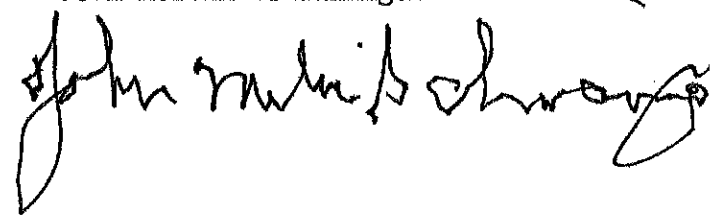
In 1977 I again sought Occupational Therapists to see if advances in the areas of prosthetics had been made. I received a prescription for the latest devices in artificial arms and wrists at the Maryland Rehabilitation Center in Baltimore. The therapist there instructed me in new and easier ways to do old things.

In general, I feel they have served me well in becoming a more productive person. I support their efforts in rehabilitation and am in favor of this Bill.

I am currently involved in the Governor's Committee for the Employment of the Handicapped in Talbot County as well as managing my 200 acres farm in Trappe, Maryland.

Thank you,

John Melvin Schwaninger



JMS:kaw