



Virginia
Regulatory
Town Hall

townhall.virginia.gov

Notice of Intended Regulatory Action (NOIRA) Agency Background Document

Agency name	Board for Hearing Aid Specialists and Opticians
Virginia Administrative Code (VAC) citation	18 VAC 80-20
Regulation title	Hearing Aid Specialists Regulations
Action title	Fee Adjustment
Date this document prepared	February 26, 2014

This information is required for executive branch review and the Virginia Registrar of Regulations, pursuant to the Virginia Administrative Process Act (APA), Executive Orders 14 (2010) and 58 (1999), and the *Virginia Register Form, Style, and Procedure Manual*.

Purpose

Please describe the subject matter and intent of the planned regulatory action. Also include a brief explanation of the need for and the goals of the new or amended regulation.

The Board for Hearing Aid Specialists and Opticians (“the Board”) seeks to amend its current Hearing Aid Specialists regulations (“regulations”) to adjust its licensing fee structure. The Board must establish fees adequate to support the costs of the Board operations and a proportionate share of the Department’s operations. By the close of the next biennium, fees will not provide adequate revenue for those costs.

The Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR) is funded entirely from revenue collected for license applications, renewal, examination fees, and other licensing fees and receives no general fund money. DPOR is self-supporting and must collect adequate revenue to support its mandated and approved activities and operations. Fee revenue collected on behalf of the various boards funds the Department’s authorized special revenue appropriation.

The Board has no other source of revenue from which to fund its operations.

Legal basis

Please identify the state and/or federal legal authority to promulgate this proposed regulation, including (1) the most relevant citations to the Code of Virginia or General Assembly chapter number(s), if

applicable, and (2) promulgating entity, i.e., agency, board, or person. Your citation should include a specific provision authorizing the promulgating entity to regulate this specific subject or program, as well as a reference to the agency/board/person’s overall regulatory authority.

- 1) § 54.1-113 (Callahan Act) requires regulatory boards to periodically review and adjust fees.
 § 54.1-201.4 provides the authority to regulatory boards to levy and collect fees.
 § 54.1-304.3 describes the authority of DPOR to collect and account for fees
 § 54.1-308 requires costs to be paid by regulatory boards
- 2) Board for Hearing Aid Specialists and Opticians.

All of these provisions of the Code of Virginia are mandatory.

Need

Please detail the specific reasons why the agency has determined that the proposed regulatory action is essential to protect the health, safety, or welfare of citizens. In addition, delineate any potential issues that may need to be addressed as the regulation is developed.

The proposed regulatory action is mandated by the following sections of the Code of Virginia. To comply with these statutes, the Board evaluates its current and projected financial position, and determines the type of fees and amounts to be established for each fee that will provide revenue sufficient to cover its expenses.

§ 54.1-113 (Callahan Act) Regulatory boards to adjust fees – Following the close of any biennium, when the account for any regulatory board within the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation or the Department of Health Professions maintained under § 54.1-308 or § 54.1-2505 shows expenses allocated to it for the past biennium to be more than ten percent greater or less than moneys collected on behalf of the board, it shall revise the fees levied by it for certification or licensure and renewal thereof so that the fees are sufficient but not excessive to cover expenses.

§ 54.1-201.4 describes each regulatory board’s power and duty to “levy and collect fees for the certification or licensure and renewal that are sufficient to cover all expenses for the administration and operation of the regulatory board and a proportionate share of the expenses of the Department...”

§ 54.1-304.3 describes the power and duty of the Director to “collect and account for all fees prescribed to be paid into each board and account for and deposit the moneys so collected into a special fund from which the expenses of the Board, regulatory boards, and the Department shall be paid...”

§ 54.1-308 provides for compensation of the Director, employees, and board members to be paid out of the total funds collected. This section also requires the Director to maintain a separate account for each board showing moneys collected on its behalf and expenses allocated to the board.

These Code sections require the Department to:

- pay expenses of each board and the Department from revenues collected;
- establish fees adequate to provide sufficient revenue to pay expenses;
- account for the revenues collected and expenses charged to each board; and
- revise fees as necessary to ensure that revenue is sufficient but not excessive to cover all expenses.

To comply with these requirements, the Department:

- Accounts for the revenue collected for each board distinctly;
- Accounts for direct board expenses for each board, and allocates a proportionate share of agency operating expenses to each board;
- Reviews the actual and projected financial position of each board biennially to determine whether revenues are adequate, but not excessive, to cover reasonable and authorized expenses for upcoming operating cycles; and
- Recommends adjustments to fees to respond to changes and projections in revenue trends and operating expenses. If projected revenue collections are expected to be more than sufficient to cover expenses for upcoming operating cycles, decreases in fees are recommended. If projected revenue collections are expected to be inadequate to cover operating expenses for upcoming operating cycles, increases in fees are recommended.

Fee adjustments are mandatory in accordance with these Code sections. The Board exercises discretion on how the fees are adjusted by determining the amount of adjustment for each type of fee. The Board makes its determination based on the adequacy of the fees to provide sufficient revenue for upcoming operating cycles.

With the effective date for new fees anticipated to be in FY2016, it will have been ten years since the last fee adjustment for Opticians and twelve years since fees for Hearing Aid Specialists were decreased significantly to allow the Board to spend down its accumulated cash balance. At that time it was anticipated that fees would increase in approximately six years. The Department generally tries to structure fees so that they will cover the Board’s expenses for a period of 4-8 years and that revenues are adequate to cover operating expenses but are not excessive. It is generally anticipated that each board would need to reassess its fee structure and raise fees in response to ongoing cost increases about every 5-6 years. One-time costs or unusual cost increases may shorten that time period.

The Department is always concerned about efficiency of operations as a means of maintaining or reducing costs, and has implemented budget review, approval, and monitoring processes, process improvement techniques, and performance measurement to monitor targets and goals.

While cost increases are not the sole reason for the fee increases, some cost categories have increased significantly since this Board’s last fee adjustment. Examples of increased costs from FY2005 to FY2013 include Information Technology which increased 130%, Rent which increased 64% and staff expenses which increased 47%.

Substance

Please detail any changes that will be proposed. Be sure to define all acronyms. For new regulations, include a summary of the proposed regulatory action. Where provisions of an existing regulation are being amended, explain how the existing regulation will be changed.

The Board will review the fees listed in 18 VAC 80-20-70 and 18 VAC 80-30-50, and based on projected revenues and expenses, develop a fee schedule that meets the requirements of the applicable statutes while being the least burdensome to the regulant population.

The following is the expected range of the proposed fee increases to be made in this regulatory action.

Range of Fees:

Fee Type		Current Fee	New Fees
New Applicant	Hearing Aid Specialist	30	85

New Applicant by Reciprocity	Hearing Aid Specialist	30	85
New Applicant Temporary Permit	Hearing Aid Specialist	30	85
Renewal	Hearing Aid Specialist	20	115
Reinstatement	Hearing Aid Specialist	20	85

Alternatives

Please describe all viable alternatives to the proposed regulatory action that have been or will be considered to meet the essential purpose of the action. Also, please describe the process by which the agency has considered or will consider other alternatives for achieving the need in the most cost-effective manner.

The Department has considered the following alternatives to increasing fees for the Board for Hearing Aid Specialists:

- Reduce services: Because the regulatory activities conducted by the Board are mandated by statute, this is not considered a viable alternative. In addition, reductions in services would result in delays in issuing licenses, creating barriers to citizen’s ability to work, and would decrease the Department’s effectiveness in ensuring that licensees conduct their activities in a manner adequate to protect the public health, safety and welfare.
- Obtain a Treasury loan to fund operations: The Department could request a loan from the general fund to cover the Board’s deficit and supplement its ongoing operations. However, this would be a short-term solution only, and would only delay the need for fee increases. When eventually implemented, fee increases would need to be even greater to provide for repayment of the loan.
- Supplement Board activities with general funds: The Department currently receives no general fund revenue, and this would require a change in the Code of Virginia and the Appropriation Act. The Department’s boards are intended to be self-funding per §§ 54.1-113, 54.1-201, 54.1-304.3, and 54.1-308 of the Code of Virginia. Use of general funds to support board operations does not appear to be an appropriate use of taxpayer dollars.

Public participation

Please indicate whether the agency is seeking comments on the intended regulatory action, including ideas to assist the agency in the development of the proposal and the costs and benefits of the alternatives stated in this notice or other alternatives. Also, indicate whether a public hearing is to be held to receive comments on this notice.

Please also indicate pursuant to your Public Participation Guidelines whether a panel will be appointed to assist in the development of the proposed regulation. Please state one of the following: 1) a panel will be appointed and the agency’s contact if you’re interested in serving on the panel is _____; 2) a panel will not be used; or 3) public comment is invited as to whether to use a panel to assist in the development of this regulatory proposal.

The agency is seeking comments on this regulatory action, including but not limited to 1) ideas to be considered in the development of this proposal, 2) the costs and benefits of the alternatives stated in this background document or other alternatives and 3) potential impacts of the regulation. The agency is also seeking information on impacts on small businesses as defined in § 2.2-4007.1 of the Code of Virginia. Information may include 1) projected reporting, recordkeeping and other administrative costs, 2) the probable effect of the regulation on affected small businesses, and 3) the description of less intrusive or costly alternatives for achieving the purpose of the regulation.

Anyone wishing to submit comments may do so via the Regulatory Town Hall website (<http://www.townhall.virginia.gov>), or by mail, email, or fax to **Demetrios J. Melis, Executive Director, Board for Hearing Aid Specialists and Opticians, Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation, 9960 Mayland Drive, Suite 400, Richmond, Virginia 23233. Telephone: (804) 367-8590, Fax: (866) 245-9693, e-mail: HearingAidSpec@dpor.virginia.gov.** Written comments must include the name and address of the commenter. In order to be considered, comments must be received by midnight on the last day of the public comment period.

A public hearing will not be held following the publication of the proposed stage of this regulatory action.

Family impact

Assess the potential impact of the proposed regulatory action on the institution of the family and family stability including to what extent the regulatory action will: 1) strengthen or erode the authority and rights of parents in the education, nurturing, and supervision of their children; 2) encourage or discourage economic self-sufficiency, self-pride, and the assumption of responsibility for oneself, one's spouse, and one's children and/or elderly parents; 3) strengthen or erode the marital commitment; and 4) increase or decrease disposable family income.

The fee increases may have a marginal decrease in disposable family income. These fee increases are not anticipated to have any other impact on Virginia families.