

Testimony of Julie H. Gatts, M.A., CCC-SLP

Chair of the Speech-Language Pathology/Audiology Advisory Board

House Committee on Health and Human Services

Monday, February 13, 2012

Opposition to HB 2659

Madam Chairperson and Members of the Committee:

I apologize for not attending the hearing in person, but with late notice I was not able to make arrangements for someone else to see my clients for the day. I hope that my written testimony will suffice to express my opinion and the opinion of the other SLP/A members of the current Advisory Board. I am a certified speech-language pathologist and a clinical assistant professor at the Schiefelbusch Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. I have served on the Advisory Board for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology for the past four years, my term is expiring this month. Prior to working at the Schiefelbusch Clinic I spent 9 years working in hospitals in Kansas.

Having found out about HB 2659 just last week, I have spoken with my colleagues at the University of Kansas, University of Kansas Medical Center, and the other SLP/A professionals on the Advisory Board in the last several days and there is consensus that since the Health Occupations Credentialing portion of KDHE will not exist any longer, oversight of our licensing and profession would fit best within the Department of Aging and Disability Services. The rationale for this is the following:

- 1) As Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists, we see individuals across the lifespan in a variety of settings. The one common thread that all of the individuals who we serve have in common is that they have a disability. We see individuals in their homes, in schools, in community based clinics, in preschools, and in medical settings. The majority of professionals in Kansas who are licensed as Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists do NOT practice in medical settings but practice in schools, homes, and community based clinics that are not medically based. To put us under the oversight of an organization that is primarily medically based would be a disservice to the professionals and to the individuals with disabilities who we serve as our needs are very different from the medical based professionals. I do not have the numbers for Kansas since this has come up so quickly but I can get those in the near future in terms of how many professionals are licensed in which settings in the state of Kansas.
- 2) We have had outstanding service from the professionals at KDHE and the HOC section has created seamless and cost effective methods of obtaining temporary licenses, renewing licensure, and dealing with complaints that are brought to the current SLP/A board. The

relationships with the staff that has been in that department and their increased understanding of our professions over the years have been very helpful with communication and follow up related to complaints. The board and the professionals within our profession would be best served by moving to the Department of Aging and Disabilities where some of the current staff might be consistent and/or the understanding of individuals with and the type of complaints we deal with would be consistent with what they experience related to some of the other boards and our board in the past.

- 3) Finally, in the four years that I have been on the board, not one complaint that has come before the board has stemmed from within a medical setting. They have been from community based clinics, educational settings, and private practitioners. If we were to be under the oversight of the Board of Healing Arts, I do not believe that they would have a good understanding of the populations and settings that we typically deal with and handle complaints from. They are different than those dealt with in medical settings. I and those I have visited with in the short time since we were notified of the bill feel strongly that the individuals who we serve and our professionals would be better served being under the oversight of the Department of Aging and Disabilities. It is a better fit for the demographics of those we serve than the Board of Healing Arts.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.