

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

Chair of the Speech-Language Pathology/Audiology Advisory Board

Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare

Tuesday, March 6, 2012

Support for Substitute House Bill 2659

Madam Chairperson and Members of the Committee:

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 due to expire. Prior to working at the Schiefelbusch Clinic I spent 9 years working in hospitals in Kansas.

With regard to Substitute HB 2659, 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 and there is support for putting the licensure responsibilities for speech language pathology and audiology under the Secretary of Aging. All of the professionals that I have spoken with are in agreement that this agency would have a better understanding of our practice and diversity of practice settings than the previously considered Board of Healing Arts.

- 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. The Secretary for and the proposed Department for Aging and Disability Services and the areas of disability that are under their umbrella are more consistent with the demographics that we serve and the settings in which we practice.
- 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 proposed Department for Aging and Disability Services 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) In the four years that I have been on the board, all of the complaints that we have dealt with have been from community based clinics, educational settings, and private practitioners. The Secretary of Aging and staff within that department are better aware of the issues that arise in more diverse settings, whereas the Board of Healing Arts deal with primarily issues associated with medical settings.
- 4) While I addressed continuity above, one area that the Advisory Board for SLP/A have been discussing in the last two years is the desire for even more consistency since our board members serve only a maximum of 2 two year terms and meet quarterly. Given these time frames, keeping continuity in the staff that the board advises is critical. We would encourage you to amend Substitute HB 2659 on page 3, line 19 to change "two" to "three," so that a board member could serve a maximum of three successive two-year terms. Putting our board under the proposed Department for Aging and Disability Services would assist with that as there is potential that some of the staff may be the same and have a good working knowledge of the background and issues that the board has dealt with in recent years.

Thank you for your consideration of our support.