

February 07, 2017

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing to you to voice my support for HB 2195, which would transfer the duties and powers of the currently free standing, Kansas Board of Hearing Aid Examiners (KBHAE) to Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services (KDADS). The bill would allow the KBHAE to stay intact and act as an advisory committee to the secretary of KDADS.

I am doctorate level audiologist who has worked in the field for 12 years in a private practice setting providing both diagnostic audiological services as well as hearing aid fitting and dispensing. Under Kansas State Law the scope of practice for an audiologist includes the fitting and dispensing of hearing aids. Audiologists are licensed under KDADS, however also hold a 2nd license from the KBHAE to fit and dispense hearing aids.

Transferring the duties of the KBHAE to KDADS would provide the following benefits.

1. Consumer Protection

- a. Currently it is very difficult for a consumer in the state of Kansas to reach the KBHAE to make inquiries or to file a complaint about services provided by an individual with a hearing aid license. The KBHAE does not maintain a website and therefore when a consumer looks online to find them they are generally directed to KDADS who must transfer them on. At that point it is still difficult for the consumer to reach them as the KBHAE only employs one part time employee with no physical office for consumers to find. I have seen this first hand with patients who have attempted to file complaints about previous providers and were unable to reach anyone in person, and never heard back from anyone when they mailed a letter. In contrast, KDADS offers a fully staffed, full time office that can be easily reached by phone, email or walk in hours.

2. Better Services for Licensees

- a. Under the current model licensees, or those wishing to become licensed, do not receive timely answers to questions. The processing for obtaining a license and renewing a license not only takes longer than necessary, it is also outdated having no online option. Having held both licenses for many years I know this process can be made easier as my audiology license under KDADS is much more efficient to obtain and/or renew.

It is my understanding that opposition to this transfer is due to the following concerns.

1. Reducing the scope of practice of hearing aid dispensers.

- a. This bill in no way restricts the scope of practice of hearing aid dispensers and therefore should have no impact on those currently practicing or those who wish to become licensed in the future.

2. Limiting consumers' access to hearing healthcare.

- a. This bill has no impact on hearing healthcare access; consumers will still be able to seek care from the professional they choose.

3. Increases costs to the state.

- a. There are no increased costs to the state, and given the ability to share resources this should actually lead to a cost savings over time.

In summary, I believe that it is in the best interest of the consumers, providers and the state of Kansas to pass HB2195, transferring the duties of the KBHAE to KDADS with continued advisory support from the current board.

Sincerely,



Stacey M Baldwin, AuD
Audiologist