

February 7, 2017

Dear Members of the House Health Committee:

I am a private practice audiologist at Associated Audiologists, Inc. As you may be aware, audiologists are doctoral-level providers of balance, hearing, sound sensitivity, and tinnitus healthcare. My scope of practice, as defined by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and Kansas State law, includes the fitting and dispensing of hearing aids. As required by Kansas State law, I uphold dual licensure: an Audiology license administered through the Kansas Department of Aging & Disability Services (KDADS) and a Hearing Aid Dispensing license administered through the Kansas Board of Examiners in Fitting and Dispensing of Hearing Instruments (KBHAE).

I support the passage of HB 2195. HB 2195 would transfer the duties of the free-standing KBHAE to KDADS, while leaving the Hearing Aid Board intact, allowing it to act as an advisory to the Secretary of KDADS. If passed, this bill will improve efficiency, transparency, and hearing consumer protection and services for licensees.

Currently, the KBHAE does not have a website, nor is organization information (including contact information and licensure purpose) readily available to consumers or employers. The KBHAE employs one staff person who works limited hours, reducing the ability of the Board to respond to consumers, licensees, and employers.

This poses a problem if a consumer wishes to file a complaint or check the status of a licensee (does provider hold a current license, how long has provider been licensed, have any disciplinary actions been taken against the provider, etc).

In addition, it becomes difficult for licensees and/or employers who must deal with an antiquated system of license application/renewal that takes weeks.

In contrast, the KDADS, has a fully staffed office that is open during normal business hours, a website that includes contact and licensee information, in addition to modern systems in place for license application and renewal.

This bill does not affect hearing instrument specialists' (other hearing healthcare providers who are not audiologists) ability to become licensed or obtain employment, or consumers' choice in hearing healthcare providers. This bill will not result in increased costs to the State of Kansas. Rather, there is a potential for savings over time.

In summary, hearing healthcare consumers and licensees have everything to gain with the passage of HB 2195.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Danielle Dorner, AuD
Audiologist