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Testimony in Opposition of: HB 2195
House Health and Human Services Committee
Presented by Haris Zafar Ph.D., CCC – A
On behalf of the Kansas Hearing Society, Inc.
February 13, 2017

Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Haris Zafar. I am a hearing instrument specialist (1990) and licensed audiologist (1997) in private practice.

I have served as a faculty member at the Wichita State University in the capacity of Program Director and assistant professor in the Healthcare Administration Program. I have also taught courses in the Audiology Program at WSU.

Why are we here today? The answer seems to be simple on the surface: to consider HB 2195 intending to move KBHAE under the KDADS.

However, the real and only issue underlying HB2195 is the goal of achieving Single Licensure for audiologists. Single licensure means audiologists would be allowed to dispense hearing aids under their audiology license without having to obtain a second license from and answer to KBHAE in matters relating to hearing aids.

Currently, audiologists with doctoral level training are exempt from taking the written and practical examination. This was a waiver agreed to by KBHAE based on paper documents regarding program requirements by KU and WSU regarding their clinical doctorate programs. Both were 4 year programs. Now, WSU is awarding the degree in only 3 years, with just one full-time Professor and one full-time clinical supervisor in audiology. The rest of the audiology faculty are adjunct. KU is still a 4 year program.

Either KU is highly inefficient, or WSU is incredibly efficient. I have served as a faculty member at WSU and I know from personal experience that the quality of graduates of a 4 year clinical doctorate program will be far superior to that of a 3 year program. The oversight for adequate competency is provided by KBHAE an independent board. This is extremely critical for consumer protection.

The disdain and outright disrespect for the traditional hearing instrument specialist is rampant in our audiology programs.

As audiology students, we were advised to never reveal that we were connected in any way to hearing instrument specialists.

The potential detrimental effects to accessibility to hearing services in rural areas has been addressed in other written testimonies. It is important to recognize that services in the rural Kansas communities are primarily provided by hearing instrument specialists including our Kansas veterans under the VA Veterans Choice Program.

In ending, HB 2195 is just the first step by a group of audiologists who want to make all the profit from selling hearing aids by systematically eliminating any competition from hearing instrument specialists.

Despite our past failures to reach a compromise, I am a firm believer that if all groups worked honestly, a solution could be achieved which would ensure consumer protection and better accessibility to hearing services, especially in rural Kansas. Our current KBHAE works well to do this.

Thank You very much for allowing me to testify.

Haris Zafar, Ph.D., CCC - A

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