

Testimony of Douglas F. Parham, PhD, CCC-SLP
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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 want to thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on Substitute House Bill 2659. I am a licensed and certified speech-language pathologist (SLP), an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Wichita State University, and the President of the Kansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association (KSHA). KSHA has approximately 1,000 members across the state. We advocate for persons with communication and related disorders, and represent the professional interests of Kansan SLPs and audiologists, regardless of whether they are members of KSHA. KSHA was actively involved in the enactment of our licensure legislation in 1991.

KSHA supports the advancement of Substitute HB 2659 for the following reasons: (1) it provides appropriate licensure oversight for our professions, (2) we would not have representation on the Board of Healing Arts, and (3) our membership supports it.

(1) Licensure oversight for our professions will be appropriately served within the Department for Aging and Disability Services.

KSHA applauds the efforts of Governor Brownback to streamline regulatory and Medicaid functions in Kansas. The Governor's Executive Reorganization Order 41 moves virtually all licensure and certification functions currently in the Department of Health and Environment to the newly designated Department for Aging and Disability Services. We are grateful to Secretary Robert Mosier and his office for their support of Substitute HB 2659, which includes our professions in this move. The original version of HB 2659 placed our licensure under the Board of Healing Arts, focusing primarily on issues related to medical settings. Such a placement would not meet optimally the needs of our professionals who work in the schools, private practice, and the myriad of other non-medical settings. Licensure oversight within the Department for Aging and Disability Services appropriately reflects the wide variety of our skilled service settings.

(2) SLPs and audiologists would not have a professional representative on the Board of Healing Arts.

SLPs and audiologists are autonomous professionals. Having our licensure oversight directly under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of H+E has helped maintain this autonomy. We

would not have professional representation on the Board of Healing Arts. Because the Cabinet-level model has worked well for our professions, moving our licensure regulations and Advisory Council to the Department for Aging and Disability Services seems to be a more logical and viable option.

(3) Kansas' SLPs and audiologists support Substitute HB 2659.

KSHA has been in contact with our membership regarding both ERO 41 and Substitute HB 2659. The feedback of our member SLPs and audiologists has expressed unequivocal support for moving our licensure to the Department for Aging and Disability Services. As elected representatives for our professions, we on KSHA's Executive Board believe that Substitute HB 2659 meets the expressed needs of our professionals.

In conclusion, KSHA strongly recommends that this Committee advance Substitute HB 2659. KSHA and the SLPs and audiologists that we represent are willing to provide any assistance that the Committee and the Governor's Office need regarding the restructuring plan and its impact on our professions.

I again want to thank you for the opportunity to address you on this matter. I will be glad to stand for questions.