

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Public Hearing on House Bill No. 2195
February 13, 2017

My name is Kelly Selznick and I am a resident of Overland Park. I am deaf and hold a Masters in Human Genetics along with a second Masters in Public Health. I support the passage of HB 2195. I am the program director of the Deaf Community Health program in Olathe which provides equal access to health information through accessible Public Health community based workshops.

Hearing loss is a growing public health issue that can impact anyone at any stage of their life. Many studies link hearing loss to poorer health due to communication barriers. Communication barriers results from an inability to access auditory information when TV shows are not captioned, information on radio is not accessible, an inability to overhear important family history information, and an inability to hear verbal information presented to them at doctor appointments. Individuals with hearing loss are more likely to experience depression, limited access to preventative services, limited access to treatment, poorer quality of life, and worse cardiovascular health outcomes compared with their hearing peers.¹

Hearing instruments include but are not limited to hearing aids and cochlear implants. Approximately 70 percent of adults aged 70 and older who could benefit from hearing aids do NOT use them. Additionally, 84 percent of adults aged 20 to 69 who could benefit from hearing aids do NOT use utilize them.² It is possible that as many as half a million Kansans who could benefit from hearing instruments are not using them.

Oftentimes, individuals become overwhelmed when seeking support services which is made even more difficult when it is not clear where high quality services are available. Transferring powers, duties, and functions of the board to the secretary for aging and disability services will allow people to access highly qualified audiologists and hearing instrument specialists with ease and in a timely manner. This will reduce the frustration that people with hearing loss experience when being fitted for hearing instruments which in turn will increase the number of individuals seeking support services.

The passage of HB 2195 will benefit Kansans by implementing high quality of hearing health standards through:

- Increased transparency of Kansas' hearing professional licensure process will increase the consumer's ability to seek out high standard hearing health services in a timely manner which is determinant to improving the hearing health of individuals.
- Empowering consumers to take charge of their hearing health by giving them a voice to report any hearing service dissatisfactions which in turn ensures that Kansas' hearing professionals are of high caliber. Furthermore, consumers will be well informed and able to choose which hearing professional they feel is the best fit for their needs.

1 Lawrence Pick, PhD. "Health care disparities in the deaf community." *Spotlight on Disability Newsletter*. November (2013). www.apa.org.

2 "Quick statistics about hearing." *National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD)*. December (2016). <https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/statistics/quick-statistics-hearing>.

- Potentially increasing the number of hearing professionals available by making it convenient for those interested in going through the licensure process.

Through increased transparency and empowered consumers this bill has a long-term impact on the quality of health among individuals with hearing loss. When individuals can access information about where they can obtain high qualified hearing health services they are more likely to seek services that may aid them with reducing the amount of communication barriers when seeking other health services.

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to present testimony.

Sincerely,

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- 1 Lawrence Pick, PhD. "Health care disparities in the deaf community." *Spotlight on Disability Newsletter*. November (2013). www.apa.org.
- 2 "Quick statistics about hearing." *National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD)*. December (2016). <https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/statistics/quick-statistics-hearing>.