

Testimony presented by Teresa Schroder, Au.D., CCC-A, to the House Health and Human Services Committee re: HB 2195

February 13, 2017

Dear Chairman Hawkins and Members of the Committee,

My name is Teresa Schroder. I am a Doctor of Audiology. I began practicing as an audiologist in 1979. Shortly after graduation from Wichita State University I obtained a license to dispense hearing aids, which was administered by the Kansas Board of Hearing Aid Examiners. I received my audiology license when the State of Kansas passed legislation to regulate the professions of Speech Language Pathology and Audiology. At that time the Kansas Department of Health and Environment administered the license. I had license number 5. I am no longer licensed in the state of Kansas. I moved to Texas in 2015, and am now a licensed Audiologist in the State of Texas. In Texas, Audiologists do not have two licenses, the Audiology license is administered by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation. There is a separate license and board for Hearing Instrument Fitters and Dispensers which is also administered under the TDLR. The regulations for consumer protection in dispensing hearing aids is the same for the two professions.

I wanted to provide my testimony to the committee due to my unique perspective. I served on the KDHE Speech Language Pathology and Audiology Advisory Board for four years. I served a one year term as the Chairman of the Board. I had a significant amount of interaction with the Program administrators during my service. I was always impressed by the extremely professional personnel who were involved in the administration of the board duties. None of them had a background in Speech Language Pathology or Audiology, but they did know how a consumer protection board should conduct business. I appreciated the careful attention to rules and regulations regarding how meetings needed to be conducted. Meetings were held with a specific agenda in mind and were guided by the Program administrators, under the direction of the chair. Consumer complaints and review of practitioner violations were handled professionally.

I also served for three years on the Board of Hearing Aid Examiners. The KBHAE is the only stand-alone board in the state. The major function of the board is the administration of the examination to become licensed to dispense hearing aids. The board meetings were conducted at the end of a long day of test administration, and often had no formal agenda that had been communicated in advance to board members. The executive director was a practitioner as were three of the five members of the board. The board had an appearance of having a conflict of interest, the licensees were regulating themselves without consistent and accountable direction. As the only Audiology member on the board, I received numerous complaints from Audiologists who were licensed under the board. 1. License renewal and providing proof of licensure for credentialing was not timely 2. Continuing education approval was not completed in a timely fashion 3. Inconsistent decisions were made regarding the rules governing continuing education

Additional concerns regarding the KBHAE would include the lack of a web site or easily accessed information regarding board functions like registering to take the exam, finding out the schedule for exams, paying examination fees or renewal fees all via the internet. The executive director is part time, and can be difficult to contact. Consumers are not able to identify who is in charge of taking complaints regarding the dispensing of hearing aids. It is time to end the confusion.

I would strongly encourage the committee to recommend moving forward with HB2195 to move the KBHAE under the direction of KDADS. It only makes sense to have both of these boards administered by the same regulatory group.

Respectfully submitted,

Teresa Schroder, Au.D., CCC-A