

February 8, 2017

Dear Members of the House Health Committee:

I am a private practice audiologist (practicing 21 years) and currently work at Associated Audiologists, Inc. I have an AuD (Doctor of Audiology) degree which required, at a minimum, four years of education beyond a Bachelor's degree. Kansas State law also requires that I maintain 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 and powers of the KBHAE to KDADS, but leave the Hearing Aid Board intact, allowing it to act in an advisory capacity to the Secretary of KDADS. If passed, this bill should improve the efficiency, transparency, and hearing healthcare consumer protection, as well as services for licensees.

The KBHAE does not have a website, nor is contact or licensee information 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 in a timely manner.

This arrangement is difficult for consumers who wish to contact the Board to file a complaint or to check on the status of a licensee (for example: Does a provider hold a current license? How long has a provider been licensed? Have any disciplinary actions been taken against the provider?).

Licensees and employers must also deal with an out-dated and inefficient system of license application and renewal that takes weeks to process.

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

This bill in no way affects hearing instrument specialists' (other hearing healthcare providers who are not audiologists) ability to become licensed or obtain employment, and it does not limit 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 from having more stream-lined processes in place.

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

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Linda M. Erickson, AuD, CCC-A
Senior Audiologist