

February 8, 2017

Dear Chairman Hawkins and Members of the Committee,

**I am writing in support of HB 2195.**

I am a doctoral level audiologist with 24 years of experience evaluating and treating patients with hearing loss, tinnitus, and balance concerns. I have worked in healthcare, private practice, and manufacturing settings over the course of my career. I have also had the benefit of practicing in other states in which licensing was a much simpler and accessible process.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and state of Kansas both include hearing aid fitting and dispensing in the defined scope of practice for an audiologist. As an audiologist who dispenses hearing aids, I currently maintain two licenses. One to practice audiology by the Kansas Department of Aging & Disability Services (KDADS) and one to dispense hearing aids from the Kansas Board of Examiners in Fitting and Dispensing of Hearing Instruments (KBHAE).

I support HB 2195 for the following reasons:

**Consumer protection:**

- 1) **Clear point of contact:** It is currently very challenging for a consumer to determine the appropriate contact when the need to file a complaint arises.
- 2) **Ease of contact:** If a consumer is fortunate enough to obtain KBHAE contact information, they will quickly discover there is no website or simple way to file and monitor the status of a complaint. KBHAE has one part-time employee who works limited hours and is based in Garnett. In sharp contrast, KDADS has several full-time employees in an easily accessible and publicized Topeka location who are available by phone and in person during normal business hours.
- 3) **Licensee status:** It is in the best interest of the consumer to have readily available information about a health professional's license status, length of licensure, and any disciplinary action against the licensee. KBHAE offers no such capability. This lack of transparency is a disservice to consumers.

**Better service for licensees.**

- 1) **Ease of contact:** The limited staff of KBHAE also reduces availability to potential licensees to obtain information when seeking a license. In contrast, KDADS is available Monday through Friday from 8am-5pm.
- 2) **Modernization:** Modern licensing agencies offer online renewal. KBHAE does not even have a website. Renewal is via snail mail by check or money order only. Weeks later, the license is received in the mail. KDADS offers convenient online license renewal which is quick, accepts credit cards, and license verification is immediately available.
- 3) **Information access:** Posting details for hearing instrument specialist/dispensing audiologist licensure on the KDADS website would be very helpful. Because KBHAE does not have a website, this information is not available online. In other states, an individual can go to the state's website to easily find the requirements for licensure and either download or complete an online application. Other states also allow you to register for the dispensing exam online and easily see dates, location, and cost of testing. Individuals cannot do this in Kansas. A phone call is required and forms must be mailed. When I relocated to KS, I had to request forms more than

once as they were “lost” in the mail. It is an antiquated system. Transferring the licensure process to KDADS would allow access to information and applications online improving efficiency and streamline the licensing process.

It is my understanding that opponents to this legislation have presented the following arguments:

**Increased cost to the state of KS.** In fact, there is a potential for cost savings as resources can be shared.

**Restricted access:** This bill in no way restricts hearing instrument specialists. Those currently practicing will not lose their license and those interested in licensure will have access to proceed

**Consumer access and choice:** Consumers may continue to receive hearing healthcare from the professional of their choice.

I believe it is in the best interest of consumers, providers, and the state of Kansas to transfer the duties of KBHAE to KDADS by passing HB 2195.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lisa R. Battani, AuD., CCC-A, FAAA  
Hearing Aid Program Director