

February 8, 2021

Chairman Ricard Hilderbrand
Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
Re: SB77

Chairman Hilderbrand and members of the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee:

My name is Dr. Josh Sevier and I'm an audiologist at The University of Nebraska in Lincoln. I'm writing in support of SB77, The Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact bill.

SB77 was introduced this session to create the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact. Under this legislation, any audiologist or speech-language pathologist with a license to practice in their home state would be able to travel to a member state of the compact and practice their trade using a compact privilege without having to test or get a separate license in the remote state. This would also help military families whose spouses are audiologists and speech-language pathologists, as they would be able to practice without losing work and money waiting for that new state's license.

A licensure compact would make it easier for audiologists and speech-language pathologists to practice in Kansas as well as neighboring states. There are shortages of providers, particularly in the rural areas of our states, which impacts access to services. It would also allow for telehealth technology to facilitate increased access. With limited services available, especially in the western part of the state, these services are in significant need.

Kansas has a shortage of speech-language pathologists, particularly in rural areas. SB77 doesn't mandate that an audiologist or speech-language pathologist must be hired. It allows an employer to do so if the candidate is available because they have met the competency requirements. Employers can hire candidates without delay. Speech-language pathologists receive certification and must continue to complete continuing education requirements every two years to maintain certification.

As of mid-October of 2020, five states had signed onto the compact. It requires 10 states to officially enact the compact. This legislation has been introduced in other states, recently in your neighboring state of Nebraska as LB14. The current global pandemic has forced us to learn new ways to deliver care and services. With the increase use of telehealth across the country, this legislation would help audiologists and speech-language pathologists provide this critical service to the patients that need it most.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of supporting an interstate compact for audiology and speech-language pathology, and opportunities to enhance access to speech-language-hearing services across Kansas and the patients that truly rely on them.

Josh Sevier, Au.D.
615-714-4552
JoshuaDSevier@gmail.com