

February 6, 2017

Dear Members of the House Health Committee:

I am a private practice audiologist at Associated Audiologists, Inc. As you may be aware, audiologists are doctoral-level providers of balance, hearing, sound sensitivity, and tinnitus healthcare. My scope of practice, as defined by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and Kansas State law, includes the fitting and dispensing of hearing aids. As required by Kansas State law, I uphold 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 free-standing 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 will improve efficiency, transparency, and ultimately hearing healthcare consumer protection and 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 places an undue burden on consumers who wish to contact the Board to file a complaint or to check on the status of a licensee (does provider hold a current license, how long has provider been licensed, have any disciplinary actions been taken against the provider, etc).

This places an undue burden on licensees and employers who must deal with an antiquated system of license application/renewal that takes weeks.

The KDADS, on the other hand, 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, or 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.

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

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan E. Smittkamp, AuD, PhD

Audiologist