

Date: Monday, Feb. 13 Time: 1:30 pm Conference Room #546S

To: House Committee on Health and Human Services

Rep. Daniel Hawkins, Chair

Rep. Susan Concannon, Vice Chair

Re: HB 2195 Transfer of board of hearing aid examiners to secretary of KDADS

In Opposition

Chairs & Committee Members:

My name is Kimberly Bell, and I am an Audiologist in Wichita, Kansas. I have been practicing audiology since graduating from Wichita State University in 1999 in a variety of settings, from hospital and clinical settings to a private practice dispensing office. I am a member of the American Academy of Audiology and serve on the board of the Kansas Hearing Society. I have also assisted with examinations for the Kansas Board of Hearing Aid Examiners (KBHAE) for the last two years.

I would like to note that as an audiologist, I have attempted to remain impartial to either opinion. As an audiologist that also primarily dispenses hearing instruments, I have attempted to take into account both perspectives. That being said, I have come to the conclusion that this is much less about consumer protection and much more about one group attempting to take control of the other. **Legislation that is brought forth in an effort to protect the consumer is always a good thing. However legislation that is brought forth to further a personal agenda is not.**

I have several concerns with the above proposed bill; however I would like to highlight only a few:

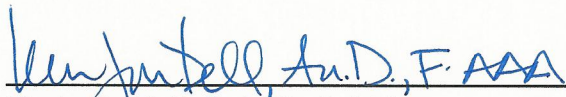
- I feel the original intent of this bill is much less about consumer care and much more about a group of individuals that feel **empowered by a title**. The KBHAE has been in place since 1968, and has served a great purpose for both consumers and those of us who strive to help those consumers. I believe moving the board to an advisory position under KDADS will be a significant disservice to the consumer. This action should not be taken for the sole purpose of allowing audiologists to obtain single licensure. There are bigger factors involved; it is simply not the \$100 or \$125 annual fee.
- There is no question that audiologists and hearing instrument specialists (HIS) have different educational needs and requirements. While audiologists must obtain a masters or doctoral degree, dispensers must train and pass a difficult exam to become licensed. In the past, audiologists were also required to pass this exam; many have stated the exam was quite comprehensive and fair. **It is imperative to note that both professions have a position in our industry.** The audiologist works in many varied auditory areas, all of importance. However, not all of that knowledge is generally required for the dispensing of hearing instruments. When concerns (red flags) are noted during testing, the HIS is mandated to refer to a medical doctor, preferably an ear, nose and throat physician. The Kansas Board of Hearing Aid Examiners ensures that the HIS maintains a high standard of care for all consumers.

- I don't believe that it is a difficult process for a consumer to file a complaint with the KBHAE, as I have heard during the last couple of months. I think it would be much less confusing to locate KBHAE as a standalone entity, than it would be to find it located under KDADS. Remedy of a consumers issues could potentially be much slower, as KDADS is a much larger entity. Again, who exactly is benefiting from the inclusion of KBHAE under KDADS?

I would like to add that I firmly believe both audiologists and hearing instrument specialists should be required to take the examination under KBHAE for hearing aid licensing, as I do not believe all audiologists are qualified to dispense hearing aids upon graduating, regardless of their degree. However that is a moot point, as that legislation was changed some time ago.

Forgive me if I question the motives behind this bill, as I obviously don't believe it is in the best interest of the consumer. I believe that the Kansas Board of Hearing Aid Examiners is looking out for, not only the consumer's best interest, but for both audiologists and hearing instrument specialists as well. However, I am quite certain the same cannot be said for the group attempting to pass this bill.

Sincerely,



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Kimberly M. Bell, Au.D., F-AAA

Doctor of Audiology

Hearing HealthCare Associates