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9, 2021

Honorable Chairperson Hilderbrand and fellow Honorable Members of the Kansas Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee,

I write in support of SB77 – Enacting the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact. I'm fairly familiar with this bill as the Senate Education Committee passed an identical bill out of committee last year. Unfortunately, final action was thwarted by the early closure of our legislative session due to COVID-19. As a result, I reintroduced this Interstate Compact bill to our committee.

I believe the passage of the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact is important for providing valuable healthcare services for our rural population, particularly for residents living in close proximity to a bordering state within the compact. In January, I submitted similar testimony to the Nebraska Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee for a hearing on LB14, their bill for the Interstate Compact. As a neighboring states, providing the framework for reciprocity for audiologists and speech-language pathologists will be helpful in addressing the troubling shortage of practitioners that we share. In particular, SB77 and LB14 are written to help in the process of establishing regulatory requirements that are consistent for all providers in participating member states.

Additionally, we have learned during the current pandemic just how important telehealth is for providing diagnostic and therapeutic services to those in need. Fortunately, this compact facilitates alternate delivery methods that include telehealth. Further benefits of this compact that were shared in testimony last year during our hearings in Kansas included:

- Improved continuity of care for residents of all ages
- Improved portability of licensure for military spouses
- Improved access to audiology and speech-language pathology providers
- Increased choice of audiology and speech-language pathology providers

In closing, the earlier passage of very similar compacts by member states for nurses, physicians and EMS personnel have been important in our efforts to strengthen access and delivery of licensed health care across state lines. I hope you agree that they have benefitted both the patient and the provider. For these many reasons, I urge our adoption of SB77, the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact, and please know that I will continue working diligently toward such adoption in the Nebraska legislature.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Molly Baumgardner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Molly Baumgardner