

Testimony of Douglas F. Parham, PhD, CCC-SLP  
President  
Kansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association

House Committee on Health and Human Services

Monday, February 13, 2012

Opposition to HB 2659

Madam Chairperson and Members of the Committee:

I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on House Bill 2659. I am a licensed and certified speech-language pathologist (SLP), an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Wichita State University, and the President of the Kansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association (KSHA). KSHA has approximately 1,000 members across the state. We advocate for persons with communication and related disorders, and represent the professional interests of Kansan SLPs and audiologists, regardless of whether they are members of KSHA. KSHA was actively involved in the enactment of our licensure legislation in 1991.

KSHA applauds the efforts of Governor Brownback to streamline regulatory and Medicaid functions in Kansas. Just last Tuesday, the governor filed Executive Reorganization Order 41. . ERO 41 moves virtually all licensure and certification functions currently in the Department of Health and Environment to the newly designated Department for Aging and Disability Services. These include nurse aides, home health aides, medication aids, adult care home administrators, and dieticians. We are not clear as to why the professions of speech-language pathology and audiology were not included in that move.

KSHA opposes the advancement of HB 2659 for the following reasons: we have not had a chance to properly assess its impact on our professions, we were not involved in its creation and development, and we will not have representation on the Board of Healing Arts.

(1) SLPs and audiologists have not had a chance to meaningfully assess the impact of HB 2659 on our professions.

Only last week were we able to access ERO 41 and HB 2659. KSHA immediately contacted our membership via e-mail, but our members have not had a chance to thoroughly consider the contents of these documents. We gladly will be active participants in finding solutions that are beneficial to everyone involved in this process, but our participation needs to be informed by thoughtful deliberation.

(2) SLPs and audiologists were not involved in the development of HB 2659 and its potential impact on our professions.

To our best knowledge, no one from KSHA's Executive Board or our membership was contacted and asked to provide professional input during the creation of HB 2659. This concerns us greatly. We were not consulted as to how the plan might impact us or to how the plan could be improved. We are more than willing to discuss in more detail our concerns about HB 2659 with members of the Committee and with the Governor's Office, as well as propose alternative solutions.

(3) Given the wording of HB 2659, SLPs and audiologists will not have a professional representative on the Board of Healing Arts.

SLPs and audiologists are autonomous professionals. Having our licensure oversight directly under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of H+E has helped maintain this autonomy. As HB 2659 is currently written, we will not have professional representation on the Board of Healing Arts. Because the Cabinet-level model has worked well for our professions, moving our licensure regulations and Advisory Council to the newly designated Department for Aging and Disability Services seems to be a more viable option.

An additional consideration for the Committee is that a move to the Board of Healing Arts would result in the loss of 10% of licensure fees paid, as that Board utilizes a separate fee fund. It is more efficient, cost effective, and—we believe—more reasonable to either leave our licensure regulation under Health and Environment or move it to the Secretary for Aging and Disability Services.

In conclusion, KSHA strongly recommends that the Committee not advance HB 2659. KSHA and the SLPs and audiologists that we represent are willing to provide any assistance that the Committee and the Governor's Office need regarding the restructuring plan and its impact on our professions.

I again want to thank you for the opportunity to address you on this matter. I will be glad to stand for questions.