

Oregon Speech-Language and Hearing Association
SB 287: Statement of Support
Senate Education Committee
March 17, 2015

OSHA is the membership association that represents the approximately 3,000 speech-language pathology and audiology professionals practice in Oregon. OSHA's vision is to promote best practice methods and ethical principles so that Oregonians with communications disorders can reach their full potential in the home, school and community.

OSHA supports SB 287 as a way to streamline licensing of speech-language pathologists (SLPs), so that a single profession-based license issued by the Oregon State Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology (BSPA or Board) is required for SLPs to practice in any setting.

Since 1952, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) has promulgated national standards for training and certification of SLPs, and the Board's license requirements are based on these standards. ASHA accredits graduate programs nationwide, requiring students to gain expertise and experience to prepare them to practice in any setting with individuals from birth to death. ASHA certification (and Board licensure) requires a master's degree from an accredited program, nine months of supervised post-graduate clinical experience, and passing a national examination. Over the last 10 years, more and more states have streamlined their SLP licensing requirements and conformed them to ASHA training and accreditation standards in creating a single, "universal" license.

Although speech language pathology grew out of the teaching profession, SLPs are not teachers, and both professions have developed their own standards over the past decades. In public schools, SLPs provide related special education services and do not have teaching responsibilities for a classroom. Speech-language pathologists play a strong role in facilitating cognitive, linguistic, and communication development in the children they serve allowing them to achieve at the highest level of their potential in these areas and thus the school curriculum

Currently, under ORS 681, SLPs employed solely by a school district, education service district, or charter schools are allowed to be licensed by Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC) as an alternative to Board licensure. Unfortunately, TSPC's teacher licensing standards allow licensure for those with a Bachelor's degree in SLP, and without a year of supervised experience. Those with only an undergraduate degree are inadequately prepared to successfully meet the demands of the diversity of the public school population (Professional, 2006, Whitmire & Eger, 2003). Also, because TSPC requires applicants to be graduates from programs accredited by TSPC, SLP applicants are not eligible for TSPC

licensure unless they hold an equivalent license from another state. This means that qualified SLPs may be unable to work in Oregon schools requiring TSPC licensure.

SB 287 would:

1. Reduce confusion and unlicensed practice created by the differing standards for TSPC and BSPA licenses, especially for new graduates and those migrating to Oregon.
2. Ensure that all students are evaluated, diagnosed, and treated by SLPs who meet the highest standards of the profession in pre-service training and continuing education.
3. Improve access to services by increasing the pool of qualified SLP applicants for school employment to include new graduates of over 250 out-of-state programs accredited by ASHA.
4. Clarify the roles of teachers and SLPs in the schools, so that each performs at their highest level of expertise.
5. Recognize the unique skills of SLPs (similar to occupational and physical therapists) in addressing the special needs of Oregon students.
6. Eliminate costs for TSPC and the Oregon universities as ASHA becomes the single accrediting body for Oregon SLP training programs.

{OSHA requests your support... }.

Andy McMillin, degree/CCC-SLP

Date

President

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