



Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, Governor

**Board of Examiners For
Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology**
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SUMMARY SB 287 (2015 Session)

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Simplifies and upgrades the requirements for licensure for Oregon Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) to create a unified standard that matches national credentialing and accreditation standards.

BACKGROUND:

SLPs work in schools, private practice, hospitals, clinics, skilled nursing facilities and home health. In Oregon, the Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology (BSPA) regulates the practice of speech-language pathology and audiology under ORS Chapter 681. The BSPA license is valid in any practice setting.

ORS 681.230(4) outlines an exemption from BSPA licensure for SLPs licensed as educators by the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC), with endorsements in speech impaired or communications disorders. This exemption is only valid for SLPs who practice SLP solely as an employee of an education service district, a school district or a charter school.

SLPs' scope of practice and professional training has grown dramatically. Since the early 1980s, BSPA's licensure requirements have been a master's degree, one year of supervised post-graduate clinical experience, and passing a national exam. These requirements match those of the Certificate of Clinical Competency—a national credential issued by the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA). BSPA/ASHA standards are higher and more specialized than TSPC's requirements for Oregon educators.

PROBLEM:

Conflicting regulations by two licensing bodies create dual standards for initial licensure and continuing education of SLPs who work in schools. Applicants and school administrators are confused, and BSPA has found many instances of SLPs working without licenses and with minimal qualifications. TSPC continues to fully license SLPs with only a bachelor's degree or without the supervised post-graduate experience. Some SLPs maintain dual licensure (even though it should be unnecessary), which increases costs for licensees. TSPC requires applicants to graduate from programs it accredits or hold a teacher license from another state, which makes it impossible for qualified SLPs recently trained in other states to obtain TSPC licensure.

BSPA's mission is public protection. The current system puts Oregon schoolchildren at risk for being assessed and treated by unlicensed or unqualified SLPs. Without competent care by qualified SLPs, students' rights to a free and appropriate public education under IDEA are compromised. School children with special needs may not achieve their developmental and educational milestones. And the lives of students with swallowing disorders are at risk if their feeding is not managed by highly-skilled SLPs.

SOLUTION:

The exemption in ORS 681.230(4) would be changed so that it only applies to SLPs licensed by TSPC before July 1, 2016. Thus, as of July 2016, BSPA would issue all new Oregon SLP licenses. SLPs previously licensed by TSPC would be "grandfathered" by continually renewing their TSPC license after July 2016.

SUPPORT:

Teacher Standards & Practices Commission (unanimous vote July 31, 2014); Oregon Speech-Language & Hearing Association (OSHA); Oregon Education Association (OEA); University of Oregon, Portland State University, Pacific University (SLP training programs). No known opposition.

FISCAL IMPACT:

BSPA expects to absorb the cost of additional licensees within its 2015-17 Governor's Budget.

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