

To: House Committee on Education
From: Kirsten Davis, Speech Language Pathologist
RE: Support for HB 2959

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Wright and Hudson and members of the committee–

My name is Kirsten Davis and I am here today as a speech language pathologist of 3.5 years, and I am here to express my support for House Bill 2959.

As a trained health professional in school, I am both licensed and practice within school systems and settings that can sometimes be in conflict with one another. We believe our students deserve the best possible educational journey at every turn and we know that the barriers that provide for these conflicting rules to our licensure are systemic, so we know the solutions will take long-term commitment and dedication.

In my school district, I have a caseload of 50 (including my “response to intervention” students who are not on an IEP but who receive weekly services), with half of my students receiving an hour of therapy per week. This results in my putting in many 11-hour days. In addition to working with my students, I have data notes to write, progress reports, assessment reports and other paperwork specific to working in schools (i.e. evaluation planning paperwork, IEP’s, etc.).

My workload prevents me from providing weekly homework for my students and collaborating as much as I would like with their parents, teachers and instructional assistants. It also prevents me from being able to push into my student’s classrooms in addition to our pull-out sessions.

It is known that daily practice outside of sessions is important for developing and consolidating skills learned in therapy. It is also known that collaborating with and training teachers and IA’s helps the development and generalization of skills across environments. My inability to attend fully to these aspects of care robs students of these areas of evidenced-based practice and does not support the kinds of outcomes everyone in the community desires. In my school district just one more full-time SLP would make the difference in my ability to serve my students more fully. The addition of an SLPA would only increase my workload, as I would need to plan sessions, supervise, troubleshoot and collaborate with another person as well as observe 25% of their therapy sessions.

I regularly hear of speech therapists in other school districts who are so overburdened with students they only work with their students once or twice per month, rendering their services inconsequential and shallow. I fervently hope that my situation never rises to that level of absurdity.

One clear concern expressed by members from all licensed professionals working in an education setting is the disconnect between requirements of licensure and the realities of

practice in schools. That is why we need HB 2959, which will create a Task Force to examine the scope of practice for each type of licensed health professional in schools, establish criteria to help define when procedures are inconsistent with scope of practice, and provide recommendations for alignment.

Thank you for your time today and I encourage the committee to vote YES on HB 2959.

Kirsten Davis
Speech Language Pathologist
Benton County