

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 2688

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Health & Long-Term Care, February 19, 1998

**Title:** An act relating to hearing instrument fitters and dispensers.

**Brief Description:** Modifying the educational requirements for licensure as a hearing instrument fitter/dispenser.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Health Care (originally sponsored by Representatives Skinner, Cody, Backlund, Conway and Anderson).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Health & Long-Term Care: 2/19/98 [DPA].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Deccio, Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Fairley, Franklin and Wojahn.

**Staff:** Joan K. Mell (786-7447)

**Background:** Hearing instrument fitters/dispensers are licensed by the Department of Health and regulated by the Board of Hearing and Speech. The board also regulates certified audiologists and certified speech-language pathologists.

An applicant for licensing must have at least six months of apprenticeship training approved by the board, but the board may waive part or all of the training for any formal education in fitting and dispensing recognized by the board. Applicants receive one-year permits as hearing instrument fitters/dispensers permit holders to work under the direct supervision of licensees for apprenticeship training.

The department issues interim permits to applicants for certification as audiologists and speech-language pathologists in order to receive postgraduate professional experience as a condition of certification.

Applicants for licensing must be at least 21 years of age.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** After December 31, 2002, an applicant for licensing must satisfactorily complete a minimum of a two-year degree program in hearing instrument fitter/dispenser instruction approved by the board. The apprenticeship training program for permit holders under licensees is repealed.

Technically, permits for applicants for certification as audiologists and speech-language pathologists are renamed as interim permits.

The minimum age for applicants for licensing is repealed.

**Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:** Interim permit is taken out of the definition of interim permit holder. Interim permit is the permit issued to applicants for audiology or speech pathology certification. The practice limitations provision is reinstated and amended to pertain only to interim permit holders.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed, except for sections 1, 3 through 14, and 16 through 21 which take effect January 1, 2003.

**Testimony For:** The two-year educational requirement has been considered by experts in hearing instrument fitting and dispensing, and is a valid competence requirement for licensing. All amendments are technical corrections.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Lisa Thatcher, WA Hearing Aide Society (pro).