

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2589

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, February 28, 2002

Title: An act relating to licensure of audiologists and speech-language pathologists.

Brief Description: Providing for licensure of audiologists and speech-language pathologists.

Sponsors: House Committee on Health Care (originally sponsored by Representatives Linville, Mulliken, Cody, Skinner, Veloria and Kenney).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/21/02, 2/28/02 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Thibaudeau, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Costa, Deccio, Fraser, Parlette and Winsley.

Staff: Tanya Karwaki (786-7447)

Background: Speech-language pathologists and audiologists are certified by the Department of Health. No person may use the titles "certified speech-language pathologist" or "certified audiologist" without being certified by the department as meeting educational and professional standards and passing an examination.

Speech-language pathology includes treatment of speech and language disorders. Audiology relates to hearing disorders and includes the fitting and dispensing of hearing instruments.

Summary of Amended Bill: Speech-language pathologists and audiologists must be licensed by the Department of Health in order to practice. Persons certified as education staff associates by the State Board of Education are exempt from regulation under this chapter unless they elect to become licensed. Under grandfather clauses, persons who, on January 1, 2003, are currently certified by the department are granted an audiology license or speech language pathology license.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The amendment clarifies that only audiologists or speech-language pathologists who, as of January 1, 2003, are certified by the Department of Health are automatically granted an audiology license or speech-language pathology license.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2003.

Testimony For: Washington is one of only four or five states that does not require mandatory licensure of speech language pathologists and audiologists. Licensure is necessary to provide consumer protection for people receiving speech and hearing services. Because certification is voluntary, fewer and fewer audiologists and speech language pathologists are seeking certification and the credentialing program is not financially self-sustaining.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Melissa Johnson, Washington Speech and Hearing Association (pro); Gayle Burditt, Washington Speech and Hearing Association (pro); Lisa Thatcher, Washington Hearing Health Care Providers (pro).