

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5358

As Passed Senate, March 9, 2005

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

Brief Description: Regarding speech-language pathologists and audiologists.

Sponsors: Senators Keiser and Parlette.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 1/31/05, 2/7/05 [DP].

Passed Senate: 3/9/05, 47-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Keiser, Chair; Thibaudeau, Vice Chair; Deccio, Ranking Minority Member; Benson, Brandland, Franklin, Johnson, Kastama, Kline, Parlette and Poulsen.

Staff: Stephanie Yurcisin (786-7438)

Background: The Board of Speech and Hearing licenses speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and hearing instrument fitters/dispensers. It acts as the disciplining authority for unprofessional conduct under the Uniform Disciplinary Act.

Speech-language pathology includes the treatment of speech and language disorders that impede oral competencies and the normal process of communication. Audiology relates to hearing disorders that impede the process of human communication, and includes the application of aural rehabilitation and the fitting and dispensing of hearing instruments.

Interim permits may be issued to speech-language pathologists and audiologists who meet academic and practicum requirements for licensure but need to complete post-graduate professional experience and examination requirements. Interim permit holders must practice under the direct supervision of a licensed hearing instrument fitter/dispenser, licensed speech-language pathologist, or licensed audiologist. Direct supervision requires that the supervisor be physically present in the same room with the interim permit holder, observing the nondiagnostic testing, fitting, and dispensing activities at all times.

Audiologists and speech-language pathologists who are certified as educational staff associations by the state board of education are exempted from the licensing requirements.

Summary of Bill: The direct supervision requirement for speech-language pathologists and audiologists who practice pursuant to an interim permit is removed. Those practicing under an interim permit must do so under supervision, but not necessarily direct supervision.

The exception for audiologists and speech-language pathologists who are certified by the state board of education, but who additionally practice outside of a school setting, is clarified to require that he or she be licensed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The direct supervision requirement is outdated and unnecessary. Some hospitals are not hiring audiologists and speech-language pathologists with interim permits because they cannot comply, personnel-wise, with the direct supervision requirements. The bill also closes the education credentialing loophole that was unintentionally created.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Melissa Johnson, Washington Speech and Hearing Association.