

FINAL BILL REPORT

EHB 2108

C 189 L 14
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Concerning hearing instrument fitter/dispensers.

Sponsors: Representatives Ross, Moeller and Johnson.

House Committee on Health Care & Wellness
Senate Committee on Health Care

Background:

I. Hearing Instrument Fitters/Dispensers.

A hearing instrument fitter/dispenser is authorized to sell, lease, or rent hearing instruments; modify hearing instruments; administer non-diagnostic tests; and use other procedures essential to these functions. The practice of fitting and dispensing hearing instruments includes:

- recommending specific hearing instrument systems, specific hearing instruments, or specific hearing instrument characteristics;
- taking impressions for ear molds;
- using non-diagnostic procedures and equipment to verify the appropriateness of the hearing instrument fitting; and
- performing hearing instrument orientation.

II. Qualifications.

To be licensed as a hearing instrument fitter/dispenser, a person must:

- complete a two-year degree program in hearing instrument fitter/dispenser education approved by the Board of Hearing and Speech (Board) and pass an examination;
- hold a current, unsuspended, unrevoked license from another jurisdiction whose standards are substantially equivalent to Washington's; or
- hold a current, unsuspended, unrevoked license from another jurisdiction; demonstrate that he or she has actively practiced in the other jurisdiction for at least 48 of the past 60 months; achieve active certification from the International Hearing Society or the National Board for Certification in Hearing Instrument Sciences; and pass an examination.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary:

I. Hearing Instrument Fitters/Dispensers.

Hearing instrument fitters/dispensers are re-named "hearing aid specialists."

II. Qualifications.

A person may be certified as a hearing aid specialist if he or she satisfactorily completes:

- a Board-approved, nine-month certificate program offered by a Board-approved hearing aid specialist program;
- a practical examination approved by the Board, which must be given at least quarterly and may be proctored by industry experts hired by the Board; and
- the hearing aid specialist examination.

The Department of Health (DOH), the Board, and representatives from community and technical colleges must review the opportunity to establish an interim work-based learning permit, or similar apprenticeship opportunity, to provide an additional licensing pathway for hear aid specialists. The group must consider the following areas:

- the opportunity to provide a work-based learning permit to applicants who either have a two-year or four-year degree in a field of study approved by the Board from an accredited institution of higher education or are no more than one full-time academic year away from such a two-year or four-year degree;
- the criteria for designating a board-approved hearing aid specialist or audiologist as the applicant's supervisor;
- the recommended duration of an interim work-based learning permit or apprenticeship;
- recommendations for a work-based learning permit or apprenticeship and opportunities to offer a program through a partnership with private business or through a partnership with accredited institutions of higher education and a sponsoring private business;
- recommendations for the learning pathways or academic components that should be required in any work-based learning program, which must include specific training elements that must be completed, such as audiometric testing, counseling regarding hearing examinations, hearing instrument selection, ear impressions, hearing instrument fitting and follow-up care, and business practices, including ethics, regulations, and sanitation and infection control; and
- recommendations for the direct supervision of a work-based learning permit or apprenticeship, including the number of persons a hearing aid specialist or audiologist may supervise.

The DOH, the Board, and the representatives from community and technical colleges must submit recommendations to the health committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2014.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	86	12	
Senate	45	4	(Senate amended)

House 96 2 (House concurred)

Effective: June 12, 2014
July 1, 2015 (Section 4)