
Health Care & Wellness Committee

HB 1043

Brief Description: Concerning the audiology and speech-language pathology interstate compact.

Sponsors: Representatives Leavitt, Rude, Dufault, Kloba, Ryu, Ortiz-Self, Dolan, Wylie, Harris, Simmons, Goodman, Bronoske, Kirby and MacEwen.

<p>Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enacts the audiology and speech-language pathology interstate compact.
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Hearing Date: 1/31/22

Staff: Jim Morishima (786-7191).

Background:

An audiologist is a person licensed to apply principles, methods, and procedures related to hearing and the disorders of hearing and related language and speech disorders that impede the normal process of human communication. A speech-language pathologist is a person licensed to treat human communication disorders affecting speech, language, and swallowing. The Board of Hearing and Speech is the disciplining authority for both audiologists and speech-language pathologists.

The Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact (Compact) is an agreement between member states to facilitate the interstate practice of audiologists and speech-language pathologists. The Compact became effective when enacted by 10 states (as of January 2023, 15 states have enacted the Compact).

Summary of Bill:

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

Compact Establishment.

The Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact (Compact) is enacted. An audiologist or speech-language pathologist (collectively "practitioner") licensed in one member state is authorized to practice, under a privilege to practice, in all other member states. The privilege to practice is derived from the practitioner's home state license. Member states must recognize a practitioner's right to practice via telehealth.

Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Compact Commission.

The Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Compact Commission (Commission) is a joint public agency established by the Compact's member states. The membership of the Commission consists of an audiologist and a speech-language therapist selected from each state plus an additional five public members. The Commission must establish an executive committee to act on behalf of the Commission consisting of seven voting commission members and three non-voting members representing professional and membership organizations.

Most meetings of the Commission must be open to the public. The Commission may, however, close meetings to the public to discuss certain matters, including noncompliance by member states, employment matters, litigation, disclosure of trade secrets, law enforcement investigative records, and matters specifically exempt from disclosure by federal or state law.

The Commission's enumerated powers include:

- establishing bylaws;
- establishing a code of ethics;
- adopting uniform rules to facilitate and coordinate implementation and administration of the Compact, which are binding on all member states; and
- performing other functions necessary or appropriate to achieve the purposes of the Compact consistent with the state regulation of audiology and speech-language pathology licensure and practice.

The Commission may adopt rules subject to public notice requirements. At least 30 days prior to adopting a rule, the Commission must file a notice of proposed rulemaking and allow the submission of written input. The Commission must conduct a public hearing if such hearing is requested by at least 25 people, a state or federal subdivision or agency, or an association with at least 25 members. The Commission may enact emergency rules that must undergo the full rule-making process no later than 90 days after their effective dates. Rules adopted by the Commission may be rejected within four years of enactment by a majority of the legislatures of the Compact states through statute or resolution.

The Commission may levy an annual assessment on Compact states to cover the costs of operations and activities.

Data System.

The Commission must establish a data system containing information regarding licensure, adverse actions, and investigations on all practitioners in member states. Member states must submit a uniform data set to the data system. The Commission must notify all Compact states of any adverse action taken against a licensee or license applicant. Compact states may designate information that may not be shared without the states' permission. Any information that is subsequently required to be expunged by the laws of the Compact state must be removed from the system.

Exercising the Compact Privilege.

In order to exercise the Compact's practice privilege, a practitioner must:

- hold an active, unencumbered license in his or her home state;
- have no adverse actions against his or her license within the previous two years;
- notify the Commission of his or her intention to seek the Compact privilege;
- pay applicable fees; and
- report any adverse actions taken by any non-Compact state within 30 days of the action.

In addition, an audiologist must meet one of the following three educational requirements: (1) on or before December 31, 2007, graduation from an accredited master's or doctoral degree program in audiology; (2) on or after January 1, 2008, graduation from an accredited doctoral degree program in audiology; or (3) graduation from an audiology program housed outside of the United States that is approved by the authorized accrediting body in the applicable country and verified by an independent credentials review agency to be comparable to a state licensing board-approved program.

A speech-language pathologist must meet one of the following two educational requirements: (1) graduation from an accredited master's degree program; or (2) graduation from an audiology program housed outside of the United States that is approved by the authorized accrediting body in the applicable country and verified by an independent credentials review agency to be comparable to a state licensing board-approved program. The speech-language pathologist must also complete a supervised postgraduate professional experience.

In addition both audiologists and speech-language pathologists must:

- complete a supervised clinical practicum experience;
- pass a national examination;
- have not been convicted or found guilty, and not entered into an agreed disposition, of a felony related to the practice of audiology or speech-language pathology; and
- have a valid United States social security number or national practitioner identification number.

When a practitioner applies for the Compact practice privilege, the licensing board in the member state must ascertain whether the applicant holds or has held a license issued by any other state and whether there are any encumbrances or adverse actions on the applicant's license.

Member states must also implement criminal background checks, which must include both state and federal biometric checks. Communications between member states, or the member states and the Commission, may not include information received from the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

A practitioner may hold only one home state license at a time. For purposes of the Compact, an active-duty member of the military or the member's spouse must designate a home state where the individual has a current license in good standing. A practitioner may change home states, but if the new home state is not a Compact member, the license becomes a single-state license.

Discipline.

A practitioner practicing in a member state must comply with the state practice laws of the state in which the client is located at the time services are provided. The practitioner is subject to the licensing board, the courts, and the laws of the state where the client is located. A member state may, in accordance with due process and the state's laws, remove the practitioner's Compact privileges, impose fines, or take any other action necessary to protect the health and safety of its citizens.

Only the practitioner's home state may take action against the practitioner's license. The home state may take actions based on the investigations and factual findings of another member state. If a practitioner's license is encumbered by the home state, the practitioner loses Compact privileges in all other states. A disciplinary order must include a statement that the practitioner's privilege to practice is deactivated in all member states during the pendency of the order. The Compact privilege may be restored only if the home state license is no longer encumbered, two years have passed since the adverse action, and the practitioner meets all of the other conditions of Compact participation. The Compact does not override a member state's decision that participation in an alternative program may be used in lieu of adverse action.

Conflict Resolution.

The Commission, in the reasonable exercise of its discretion, must enforce the Compact. By majority vote, the Commission may initiate legal proceedings against a state that is not in compliance with the Compact. The Commission must attempt to resolve disputes between Compact states and adopt rules regarding mediation and binding arbitration.

Joining and Withdrawing from the Compact.

States may join the Compact by enacting the Compact's provisions into law. States that join after the Compact has been established are subject to the rules in place at the time. The Compact may be amended by enactments in all member states. A state may withdraw from the Compact by repealing its enacting statute, but the withdrawal is not effective until six months after the statute's repeal.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.