

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2589

As Reported by House Committee On:
Health Care

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

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

Sponsors: Representatives Linville, Mulliken, Cody, Skinner, Veloria and Kenney.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care: 1/31/02, 2/8/02 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires a license issued by the Department of Health to practice speech-language pathology and audiology in this state.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Cody, Chair; Schual-Berke, Vice Chair; Campbell, Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Ballasiotes, Benson, Conway, Darneille, Edwards, Ruderman and Skinner.

Staff: John Welsh (786-7133).

Background:

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

Speech-language pathologists and audiologists are certified by the Department of Health for practice. No person may use the titles of "certified speech-language pathologist" or "certified audiologist" without being certified by the department in meeting educational and professional standards established by the Board of Hearing and Speech, and passing an examination.

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.

Hearing instrument fitters/dispensers are licensed by the department in meeting training and professional standards established by the board, and persons may not fit and dispense a hearing instrument or represent themselves as engaging in the fitting and dispensing of hearing instruments without being licensed.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Speech-language pathologists and audiologists must be licensed by the Department of Health in order to practice and represent themselves accordingly in practice. Persons certified as education staff associates by the State Board of Education are exempted unless electing to obtain a license. Every person certified as a speech-language pathologist or audiologist would receive a license, including persons who are not certified but eligible for certification applying before January 1, 2003.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Licensing requirements were clarified. An exemption was provided for persons certified by the superintendent of public instruction. Grandfather clauses were added for those persons currently certified by the Department of Health, and those qualifying for certification applying before January 1, 2003. An effective date of January 1, 2003, is provided.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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

Testimony For: Voluntary certification of these professionals is hurting the credentialing program because many have not applied for certification. Consequently, the costs of the credentialing program are increasingly borne by only the certified practitioners and reflected in higher fees. Also, the public is exposed to regulated practitioners who are not accountable through the state's professional disciplinary process. Washington is one of six states that does not license these practitioners.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Melissa Johnson and Jan Bjorklund, Washington Speech and Hearing Association; and Lisa Thatcher, Washington Hearing Health Care Providers.