

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1500

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES,
MARCH 29, 1993

Brief Description: Modifying hearing aid regulatory authority.

SPONSORS: House Committee on Health Care (originally sponsored by Representatives R. Johnson, Dyer, L. Johnson and Mastin)

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Talmadge, Chairman; Wojahn, Vice Chairman; Deccio, Erwin, Franklin, Fraser, Hargrove, McAuliffe, McDonald, Moyer, Niemi, Prentice, Quigley, Sheldon, L. Smith, and Winsley.

Staff: Scott Plack (786-7409)

Hearing Dates: March 23, 1993; March 29, 1993

BACKGROUND:

The Council on Hearing Aids examines applicants for licensure as hearing aid fitters and dispensers, and disciplines license holders for unprofessional conduct. The membership of the council consists of nine persons appointed by the Governor. Five members are licensed hearing aid fitters-dispensers, one is a physician, one is a nondispensing audiologist, and two members represent the public.

The Department of Health is required to supply and examine audiometric testing equipment and facilities for the purpose of examinations and to periodically inspect hearing aid facilities.

License holders must file with the department a \$10,000 surety bond, cash deposit or negotiable security running to the state for the benefit of any person injured or damaged by a violation of this practice act.

There is no current authority for hearing aid fitters or dispensers to place their licenses on inactive status.

SUMMARY:

The nomenclature of the council is changed to Board on Fitting and Dispensing of Hearing Aids. Its membership is reduced to seven persons. The membership will include two licensed hearing aid fitters-dispensers without masters degrees in

audiology, two licensed hearing aid fitters-dispensers with masters degrees, a medical or osteopathic physician who is an advisory nonvoting member, and two persons representing the public. The chair of the board will be elected from the membership. In the event of a tie, the chair abstains from voting.

The board is required to provide facilities necessary to carry out the examination of applicants for licensure.

The authority of the department to supply audiometric testing equipment to carry out licensure examinations and to inspect audiometric testing equipment and facilities of persons who deal in hearing aids is repealed.

The bond number of the license holder must be printed on the invoice for the purchase of a hearing aid. It is clarified that consumers have recourse to a hearing aid fitter-dispenser's bond if the hearing aid fitter-dispenser violates current law allowing consumers to return hearing aids.

License holders may place their licenses on inactive status upon the payment of specified fees, in accordance with rules adopted by the board. For reinstatement, license holders not practicing for five years must retake the practical examination and complete continuing education requirements. License holders on inactive status from two to five years must complete continuing education requirements. License holders on inactive status, but holding licenses from other states, must attest to their knowledge of the current state practice law.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED SENATE AMENDMENT:

A previously deleted provision is restored. It requires the Department of Health to periodically examine audiometric testing equipment and facilities of persons who deal in hearing aids.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: none requested

TESTIMONY FOR:

The inactive licensure status will help reducing licensing costs for persons who are not actively practicing but want to maintain their license. The change in the composition of the membership of the board (council) will assure the needed expertise on the board. Requiring that the hearing aid fitter's surety bond number be on each hearing aid purchase invoice will alert the consumer about the availability of the bond should he or she suffer injuries as the result of hearing aid services.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Lisa Thatcher, Washington Hearing Aid Society (pro);
Janice Mose, Council on Hearing Aids (pro); Dee Spice,
Department of Health (pro)