

**Robyn Zeltinger**

Bismarck, ND

Robyn.zeltinger@gmail.com

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Dear Chairman Ruby and Members of the House Human Services Committee,

My name is Robyn Zeltinger, and I am a licensed, American-Speech-Language-Hearing Association-certified speech-language pathologist in North Dakota. In addition to my current employment as Chair of the Department of Speech-Language Pathology at the University of Mary in Bismarck, I volunteer my time to serve as the acting President of the North Dakota State Board of Examiners on Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (NDSBE SLP/AUD).

I am here today to provide testimony on behalf of the NDSBE SLP/AUD in favor of House Bill 1049 (HB 1049). HB 1049 includes amendments to the ND Century Code relating to the scope of audiology, licensure requirements for speech-language pathology assistants, temporary licensure, and statutory authority to issue a subpoena in the case of an alleged violation.

Briefly, HB 1049 proposes amending Subsection 2 of section 43-37-02 of the ND Century Code to include the term “managing” in the scope of audiology. “Managing” is frequently used to encompass hearing aid check and fitting services. This amendment will ensure alignment with revisions made by 3rd party billing and reimbursement for audiology services. Therefore, to align with changes in the use of professional terminology and to remove barriers to successful billing and reimbursement procedures, the NDSBE supports the addition of the term “managing” to Subsection 2 of section 43-37-02 of the ND Century Code.

Next, HB 1049 includes a critical amendment to the Century Code relevant to the licensure requirements for SLP Licensed Assistants (SLP/LA). During the 2017 legislative session, SLP/LAs were added to the ND Century Code. At that time, licensure requirements included a bachelor’s degree in communication sciences and disorders. Since then, new programs have been developed where an individual can earn an associate’s degree specific to a speech-language pathology assistant. House Bill 1049 proposes an amendment to allow individuals holding an associate’s degree from a speech-language pathology assistant program eligibility to apply for SLP/LA licensure in the state of ND.

The NDSBE also supports amending the current Century Code to include a pathway to licensure for individuals with bachelor’s degrees in a field other than communication sciences and disorders provided they submit evidence of successful completion of the CSD-specific

coursework outlined in HB 1049. The proposed SLP/LA licensure changes in HB 1049 will remove barriers to licensure and practice in ND while aligning with professional practice updates in the field.

Also relating to licensure, HB 1049 proposes additional language to allow SLP and SLP/LA applicants to apply for a temporary license. This amendment will expedite the licensure process for those seeking re-licensure or reciprocity, again removing barriers to practice while continuing to uphold the requirements for licensure.

Finally, House Bill 1049 proposes amending the Century Code to include language allowing the board's statutory authority to subpoena records relating to alleged violations or misconduct.

As the acting President of the ND State Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology and on behalf of the members of the board, I support the amendments proposed in House Bill 1049.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Robyn Zeltinger

