

Chairman Wobbema and Senators of the Work Force Development Committee,

Thank you for having me here today. My name is Courtney Olson, I am a licensed speech-language pathologist, and the licensing secretary for the State Board of Examiners on Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology. I am here today to testify on behalf of the board in favor of House Bill 1049.

Currently, in the state of North Dakota, speech-language pathology licensed assistants are required to have a bachelor's degree in communication sciences and disorders in order to be licensed. The changes proposed by HB 1049 reduce this barrier, allowing for those who have an associate's degree from a speech-language pathology assistant program to qualify for licensure. The changes also allow those who hold a bachelor's degree in another field, but have coursework specific to speech-language pathology as outlined in HB 1049, to be eligible for licensure. These changes reduce the barriers to becoming a speech-language pathology licensed assistant while maintaining the expected level of knowledge of the field.

HB 1049 also proposes the addition of a temporary license for professionals seeking licensure. This temporary license would expedite the licensure process for those seeking reciprocity or re-licensure. This again reduces barriers to allow professionals to begin work as soon as possible. As licensing secretary, I can attest that both of the above stated changes will increase the number of applicants eligible for licensure as well as decrease the length of the licensing process.

HB 1049 also includes adding "managing" to the scope of practice for audiology. This addition keeps the audiology scope of practice aligned with the changing terminology used by third parties to refer to a variety of audiological practices.

The need for speech-language pathologists, speech-language pathology assistants, and audiologists is high in our state, and only growing. The North Dakota State Board of Examiners on Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology is proud of the efficient work we do in this digital age, and are in favor of the amendments proposed by HB 1049 to continue to keep the board as efficient and effective as possible.

Thank you for your time,

Courtney Olson, M.S. CCC-SLP