

RESPONSE FROM THE BOARD OF HEARING AID DISPENSERS

OCTOBER 5, 2011 at 1:30 p.m. Room 137 Capitol Building

The Economic Affairs Committee asks that Board Representatives Answer the Following Questions during the Board Review under House Bill No. 525:

* What is the public health, safety or welfare rationale for licensing and regulating your profession/occupation?

Hearing aid dispensers predominately service disabled and the elderly population. The Board protects the public from incompetent, unprofessional and unethical health providers. The Board accomplishes this mission through the performance of three key functions: licensure, discipline and regulation.

*If your profession/occupation were not licensed, what public protection would be lost?

Consumers receiving hearing aids from non audiologist dispensers would have little or no protection from incompetent, unprofessional and unethical health providers, especially in rural areas.

*If a license is necessary (for health, safety, or welfare), does the profession/occupation need a board for oversight? If yes, please explain why and describe the purpose of creating a board.

Yes, hearing aid dispensers predominately service disabled and the elderly population. The Board protects the public from incompetent, unprofessional and unethical health providers, especially in rural areas.

*Does your board deal with unlicensed practice issues? If yes, what types of issues?

Yes, failure to obtain a license which is a state law.

*People who are not licensed but are qualified in an occupation or profession may feel that a licensing board is preventing them from earning a living -- what is your response?

The Legislature finds and declares that the practice of hearing aid dispensers in the state affects the public health, safety, and welfare. The Board protects the public from the unqualified practice of dispensing hearing aids or unprofessional conduct by qualified practitioners. Hearing aid dispensing is a dynamic and changing art and science that is continually evolving to include new medical technologies and more sophisticated devices in patient care.

*How does your board monitor bias among board members toward a particular licensee, an applicant, or a respondent (to unlicensed practice)? How does your board monitor bias toward a particular profession/occupation, if more than one profession or occupation is licensed by the board?

The Business Standards Division has developed a "Board Member Manual" for board member policy and processes. The Division also sponsors a Board Member Training for all members to attend. There is training and instruction on how and when to recuse oneself when there might be a conflict of interest or bias.

In addition the board member composition is an avenue to monitor bias. The Board consists of five members appointed by the governor to include: two members, each of whom has been a licensed hearing aid dispenser for at least 5 years, possesses a current audiologist license and has a master's level college degree; two members, each of whom does not hold a master's level college degree in audiology but has been a licensed dispenser and fitter of hearing aids for at least 5 years before being appointed to the board; and one public member who is either an otolaryngologist or a person who is not a licensed hearing aid dispenser or a licensed audiologist and who regularly uses a hearing aid because of a demonstrated hearing impairment.

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