

CONNECTICUT SPEECH-LANGUAGE-HEARING ASSOCIATION, INC.

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Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee
Re. Raised Bill 6549

The members of the Connecticut Speech-Language-Hearing Association appreciate the efforts of your committee and the Department of Public Health to make revisions to licensed health care professionals' scopes of practice a more orderly and standardized process. Set time lines and the requirement that specific data be provided will guide professional groups in considering proposed scope of practice revisions carefully. Thank you.

However, we have some questions about the bill. As you may remember, two years ago speech-language pathologists were faced with a legislative proposal that would have limited their existing scope of practice. The legislation was proposed by a different group of professionals and we had no knowledge of it until the bill was raised and a public hearing scheduled. Could this still happen using Sec.1 (f) of Bill 6549? We want to ensure that different disciplines cannot open another's scope of practice without communication between the professions and the challenging profession bringing to the discussion the same documentation that a profession would need to collect to propose a change in their own scope of practice.

Our other questions relate to the composition and function of the Scope of Practice Committee as defined in Section 2 (a). We feel that we need to know more about the committee before we can support the concept. We are wondering what process the Department of Public Health will use to identify potential committee members from those professions that do not have licensure boards, especially since many professionals would have to take time off from work and potentially lose income to work on the committee. If passed, this bill goes into effect on July 1, 2011 and the first Scope of Practice Review Committee would need to be appointed by November 1, 2011. Requirements for members of licensure boards exist in statutes related to those professions and can be accessed by the public. We should have equal knowledge about how other committee members are selected. We are concerned that initially professions with boards could be overrepresented on the committee because those board members are an existing pool of candidates and the Department of Public Health would have little time to develop procedures for selecting other professionals.

What preparation or guidance will members be given prior to participating on the committee? Some committee members will be very familiar with the operation of DPH boards while others could find themselves at a disadvantage unless an effort has been made to train them on procedural issues and the specific duties of the committee. Will there be time to develop guidelines for all committee members?

We understand that two professionals with no personal or professional interest in the scope of practice request are included so there will be no bias in situations where one profession is contesting another's proposal. We are concerned that this could result in recommendations regarding scope of practice being made by people who do not understand the professional skills of the group seeking the change.

Thank you again for your efforts to improve the process by which professions revise their scopes of practice. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have. Please consider our questions and concerns as you deliberate this bill.

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