

Peggy Kipping

Public comment regarding: Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)  
Comments regarding: Sunset Advisory Commission Staff Report  
June 25, 2014

Madam Chair, Mr. Vice-Chair, members of the Commission. I am Peggy Kipping. I am a speech-language pathologist licensed by the State Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology. I am a member of the Executive Board of the Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association (TSHA).

I would like to address Issue 3 of the Sunset Staff Report: The unmanageable Scope of DSHS' Regulatory Functions Reduces Needed Focus on Protecting Public Health. Specifically, TSHA OPPOSES the transfer of the State Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology to the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR).

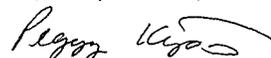
The Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association (TSHA) is the professional organization representing 5500+ practicing speech-language pathologists, audiologists, speech & hearing scientists, assistants and interns evaluating and treating over 2 million Texans with communication disorders.

Rationale for opposing:

1. The professions are an integral part of the DSHS Mission to improve health, and well-being in Texas. Our licensed professionals provide evaluative, habilitative and rehabilitative services to Texans, from birth to death, in hospitals, rehabilitation facilities, independent practice and schools. Audiologists provide intra-operative monitoring in many neurologic surgeries, speech-language pathologists provide evaluations and therapy for patients with closed head injuries and swallowing disorders as a few examples. Fifty percent of clinicians provide services in Texas public schools where they treat medically fragile children with communication disorders.
2. Members of the Board of Examiners conduct an immense amount of work supporting the Act and Rules to offset the lack of specialized knowledge of DSHS staff regarding the professions and standards. The DSHS staff responsible for operating this Board is severely understaffed (and have been for years, causing backlogs in applications for licensure). A move to TDLR where professionals serve only in an advisory capacity would cause additional significant delays in serving licensees and require increased staffing. Advisory Boards in other states do not help staff, but serve in a general advisory capacity only.

3. The State Board of Examiners in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology has consistently generated excess revenue over the cost of operating the program. The excess averages over \$250,000/year that is transferred to the State of Texas General Fund.
4. The original Act to license Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists proposed that the Board be an "independent board" e.g. Physical Therapy Board of Examiners. The Legislature at that time believed the interests of the citizens of Texas would be best served by the Board of Examiners being placed within the regulation of the DSHS. The licensees currently pay fees that would support a move to "independent board" status if a transfer is going to occur.
5. Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists are professionals as are those individuals and agencies DSHS and the Sunset staff are proposing to leave under the regulation of DSHS. Our professionals are not part of industry similar to others being governed by TDLR.
6. The Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology underwent Sunset Review in 2011 and there was no suggestion that the agency should be moved, by DSHS, Sunset Staff, Commissioners or the Legislature. The Board's next scheduled Sunset Review is 2017.
7. TSHA opposes any transfer to TDLR. Should the Sunset Staff, or Commissioners require further data to support our position, or have further questions, we will be pleased to meet with you at your convenience.

Respectfully Submitted,



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