



State of Nevada

Speech-Language Pathology, Audiology & Hearing Aid Dispensing Board

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To: Members of the Sunset Subcommittee of the Legislative Commission

From: Loretta L. Ponton, Executive Director

Implementation of A.B. 115; and Consolidation of the Board of Hearing Aid Specialists

Last interim, your subcommittee responded to a request initiated by Senator Parks, that the Sunset Subcommittee review the Audiology and Speech Pathology Board and the Hearing Aid Specialist Board; during which the subcommittee heard testimony on the advantages and disadvantages of merging the two boards into one. The Sunset Subcommittee, by unanimous vote, recommended to the Legislative Commission a merger of the two boards which was supported by the Legislative Commission. AB 115 was drafted and was passed at the last session, resulting in the formal merger of the two Boards into one consolidated Board. The effective date of the legislation was June 8, 2015 with full implementation effective October 1, 2015.

During the Sunset Subcommittee review and at the legislative session, the hearing aid specialist profession and some legislators expressed concerns with the merging of the two boards.

I am appearing before you today, upon my request, to provide a short update on our progress to date under the new consolidated structure; and the efficiencies that have been realized by the hearing aid dispensing profession as a result.

Board of Hearing Aid Specialists

The Board of Hearing Aid Specialists entered into a transition agreement to move all administrative functions to the new Board effective July 1, 2015. The previous licensing process took from 12 to 18 months; in two months the back log of 19 pending hearing aid specialist applications was cleared.

Melissa Maestas, the past Chair of the Board of Hearing Aid Specialists worked closely with the new Board; she personally set aside 3 full days to conduct practical examinations for qualified applicants to get the back log of applications cleared and licenses issued. Ms. Maestas has agreed to continue as the Board's exam proctor in southern Nevada.

**Speech-Language Pathology, Audiology and Hearing Aid Dispensing Board
Progress Report**

1. Since July 1st, there have been 31 new dispensing licenses issued; this represents a 23% increase in the total number of dispensing licensees; 40% increase in hearing aid specialists alone.

Exhibit G - SUNSET Document consists of 2 pages. Entire exhibit provided. Meeting Date: 11-04-15

We feel confident that we have a licensing process that will enable aspiring Dispensing Audiologists and Hearing Aid Specialists to come to Nevada and get to work expeditiously. We expect that the process now established will bring the average application processing time to one month, a significant improvement over the previous onerous and untimely process.

2. I am happy to inform you that we have updated our Board licensing software to support Hearing Aid Specialist licensees and are currently in the process of adding all licensee records into the data base. All licensees will now be able to renew licenses on-line at their next renewal cycle and the licensing process is now fully automated for all professions.

3. The Board has established a Dispensing Work Group comprised of dispensing audiologists and hearing aid specialists to assist in the development of regulations pertaining to fitting and dispensing hearing aids and the hearing aid apprentice program. The Hearing Aid Specialists have given generously of their time to assist us and have been in unanimous agreement on the regulations that have been drafted to date. Their input and commitment have been invaluable during this process. I have personally encouraged those that have been on the working group to apply for the two Hearing Aid Specialist positions that are currently open on the Board. I would describe the discussions in our working group as collegial, professional and productive. We have had no complaints of any sort from the hearing aid dispensing professionals about not being inclusive nor being respected as a profession.

4. As the new Board evolves incorporating the changes made by AB 115, we have many new regulations to write. We have drafted and submitted some initial regulations and are working with LCB to proceed with them. To date we have had 4 meetings with another 2 meetings scheduled in November. We are encouraged by the participation of so many stakeholders in the regulation development and review process and are hopeful our first round of new regulations will be fully developed by June 30th.

The Sunset Subcommittee does not merge or eliminate boards without careful consideration. This Committee gave us the opportunity to merge the two boards and you expect us to do so in a professional, efficient manner. We want to thank you for giving us the opportunity. We believe we are making rapid progress, the facts presented today should give you some validation for your decision. We will further commit to keep our continuing development of regulations transparent to licensees and stakeholders to ensure they are reflective of the differing professions while maintaining our continued ability to respond to and protect the public.

Attached are two letters; one from the Nevada Hearing Society and the other representing the dispensing industry regarding the merger and implementation of AB 115.