



**Senate Health Committee
HB 252 Proponent Testimony
5/26/2021**

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB 252, which would enact the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact (ASLP-IC).

My name is Carol Hofbauer and I am the current president of the Ohio Speech Language and Hearing Association. I have been a speech-language pathologist for 45 years. I decided to become an SLP when I was an undergraduate in college after spending a day with a Speech-Language Pathologist in a nursing home in New York. I was raised bilingual and am fluent in German. We visited a patient who was also bilingual but had had a major stroke. The stroke knocked out his English only but no one in the facility spoke German. As a 19-year-old visitor, I walked in and just started having a conversation with him in German. His entire face lit up and I immediately learned the power of communication.

The importance of communication and human connection is the driving force behind our profession. For the past 30 years, I have worked at a management level in the nursing home industry. I have managed nursing homes in very rural areas; there are parts of Ohio that have a nursing home in the middle of a corn field. The patients in these very rural areas have the same needs as patients in Columbus, Cleveland or Cincinnati. Access to clinicians in these rural areas is difficult and continues to be problematic.

Patients in rural areas could be treated by clinicians in neighboring states that are part of the compact.

In addition, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recently approved the use of telehealth services for nursing home patients. The compact would enable clinicians in member states to provide services to these underserved seniors via telehealth. Within the past few weeks, CMS expanded the services that are covered via telehealth for Medicare patients. Of major significance, CMS has allowed clinicians to treat cognition via telehealth. This has relevance for current nursing home patients who have recovered from COVID-19, as many are now long-haulers and need help to reverse their "brain fog" the same issue that has been noted in many younger patients who have recovered from Covid-19.

Lastly, in my management career, I carried SLP licenses in the states of Virginia, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan and North Carolina, as these were the states for which I had oversight responsibility. In addition to being quite costly, paying fees in 5 states, it was also very time consuming to ensure that I was following each state's requirements. A compact would have enabled me to provide the oversight needed without the time and fuss that was required in the absence of such a compact.

I believe a licensure compact is good for our profession and more importantly, good for the patients who need our services across the state of Ohio. On behalf of OSLHA, I would like to thank



Representatives Plummer and White for introducing HB 252 and I urge your support for this important legislation. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.

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