



77 South High Street • Suite 1659 • Columbus, Ohio 43215-6108
VOICE (614) 644-9046 • EMAIL gregg.thornton@shp.ohio.gov
WEBSITE www.shp.ohio.gov



TESTIMONY BEFORE
THE
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

THE HONORABLE SARAH FOWLER ARTHUR, CHAIR

FEBRUARY 11, 2025

STATEHOUSE
COLUMBUS, OHIO 43215

EXECUTIVE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FISCAL YEARS 2026-2027

INTRODUCTION:

Good afternoon, Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robison, and members of the House Education Committee. My name is Gregg Thornton, and I am the Executive Director for the Ohio Speech and Hearing Professionals Board. Thank you on behalf of the Ohio Speech and Hearing Professionals Board (SHP Board) for allowing me the opportunity to present testimony and address any questions you may have regarding the Executive Budget recommendations for FY2026-2027.

THE OHIO SPEECH AND HEARING PROFESSIONALS BOARD:

The mission of the SHP Board is to protect consumers by regulating the practice of three health-related professions: 1) audiology, 2) hearing aid dealing/fitting/dispensing, and 3) speech-language pathology by establishing, promoting, and enforcing practice standards and professional competency among licensees pursuant to Chapters 4744, 4747, and 4753 of the Ohio Revised Code and Ohio Administrative Code. The Board accomplishes this mission through a 9-member board composed of licensed professionals and public members. The Board establishes the requirements for minimal competency for entry into the three health-related occupations numbering nearly 11,000 professionals. The SHP Board licenses speech-language pathologists, audiologists, hearing aid fitters, hearing aid dealers, trainee permit holders, aides, and conditional speech-language pathologists. These licensees work throughout the State of Ohio in a broad range of settings, including community based/non-profit centers, home healthcare, governmental agencies, hospitals, private practice, rehabilitation facilities, retail, schools, skilled nursing facilities, universities, etc. The licensees serve consumers in all age groups. The Board also establishes and enforces practice standards and ethical codes of conduct. The Board grants licenses to qualified individuals and oversees the administration of professional examinations, both administered through vendor partners and directly by the SHP Board. To ensure licensees maintain and continue to develop their competency, the SHP Board enforces appropriate continuing education requirements. The SHP Board also investigates violations of the laws and rules governing the practice of speech-language pathology, audiology and hearing aid dealing and fitting and takes appropriate action to address the violation and ensure the public is protected. The Board is supported by a staff of four full time employees, all of whom are cross-trained, fulfill essential public protection and customer service roles.

REVENUE GENERATION:

The SHP Board is a non-GRF funded agency. The SHP Board projects generating sufficient revenue to meet its expenditures and operate within the executive budget recommendations for FY2026 and FY2027. After board consolidation in 2018, the SHP Board adopted rules that reduced and eliminated licensure fees for hearing aid dealers and fitters. For example, we eliminated the \$22.50 licensure fees for over 400 hearing

aid dealer “satellite” locations across Ohio. This represented a savings of over \$65,000 since 2018 to hearing aid dealers who own the satellite offices. Additionally, we reduced the licensure application and renewal fees for hearing aid fitters and hearing aid dealers. The table below shows the application fees before and after 2018:

	Initial App Fee – Pre 2018	Renewal Fee – Pre 2018	Total Fee – Pre 2018
Hearing Aid Dealers	\$265	\$157 every year	\$422
HAD - Satellite	\$23.50 per location	\$23.50 per location	\$23.50 per location
Hearing Aid Fitters	\$265	\$157 every year	\$422

	Initial App Fee – Post 2018	Savings	Renewal Fee–After 2018	Savings
Hearing Aid Dealers	\$200	\$65.00	\$120 every 2 years	\$194
HAD - Satellite	0	\$23.50 per location	0	\$23.50 per location
Hearing Aid Fitters	\$265	N/A	\$120 every 2 years	\$194

I would also like to take a moment to address our other licensure fees. As previously mentioned, the SHP Board is a non-GRF funded agency. We are completely self-funded with reasonable licensure fees. There has been no increase in application fees for speech-language pathologists and audiologists since 1992. In fact, in 2006, the Board reduced the biennial license renewal fee for audiologists and speech-language pathologists from \$150 to \$100. Our licensure fees are well within and in most cases lower than the licensure fees for the five other states that share borders with Ohio. Additionally, unlike other licensure boards in other states, the Board does not charge fees for other services such as replacement of wall certificates, name changes, or for sending license verification letters to other states.

Since 2018, approximately \$7,275,510 has been saved by hearing aid dealers and hearing aid fitters through the reduction and abolishment of fees by the Board. Since 2006, approximately \$2,910,000 has been saved by Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists when the licensure fee was permanently reduced. And for over thirty-one years our Conditional Speech-Language Pathologists continue to only pay one licensure fee to receive two licenses. The first license is their conditional license. Once the conditional requirements are met, they transition into full licensure as a speech-language pathologist. Since 1992, there has been no separate application fee to transition into full speech-language pathology licensure, and many conditional speech-language pathologists do not have to renew their speech-language pathology license for nearly three years.

The SHP Board is fully committed to keeping our licensing costs low in Ohio.

BOARD EXPENDITURES:

The Executive Budget Recommendations for FY2026-2027 will meet the Board's critical mission operations. The Board's requested budget for FY2026 of \$649,200 is a half-percent (0.5) decrease compared to the requested budget for FY2025. The Board's requested budget for FY2027 of \$665,400 is a 2.5 percent increase compared to the requested budget for FY2026. These variances are due to areas such as payroll in accordance with the collective bargaining agreements with the State of Ohio, administering our new hearing aid fitter practical exam, enhancements to eLicense Ohio for the data integration with the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact's database system, called Compact Connect.

BOARD EFFICIENCIES:

The SHP Board fully utilizes the back-office support functions and services provided by the Department of Administrative Service – Central Service Agency ("CSA"). By consolidating support services provided by the CSA, the SHP Board does not have to hire personnel to manage functions related to fiscal processing, information technology, human resources, or procurement. The SHP Board also shares access to the eLicense Ohio system with other regulatory boards to process and manage all aspects of licensure activities, including the processing of licensure applications, issuance of licenses, enforcement activities, and continuing education requirements. As a result of this leveraging, there has been no increase in the Board's staff since 1994.

THE AUDIOLOGY AND SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY INTERSTATE COMPACT:

In 2021, Ohio became the fourteenth state to join the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact (ASLP-IC). There are currently thirty-four states and one U.S. territory that have joined the ASLP-IC, which will allow licensed audiologists and speech-language pathologists to practice across state lines in those member states under a privilege. Eight states (Arizona, Illinois, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, and Pennsylvania) have proposed legislation to adopt the ASLP-IC. Service delivery can be both in-person and virtually via telepractice. The ASLP-IC addresses a real need to streamline the application process, ensure continuity of patient/client care, while reducing regulatory barriers and excessive licensure fees for practitioners who practice in multiple states.

CONCLUSION:

We appreciate this opportunity to share information with you about the SHP Board's mission, and how we strive to ensure that our mission is efficiently accomplished for all Ohioans. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregg B. Thornton, Esq.
Executive Director
Ohio Speech and Hearing Professionals Board