



COLLEGE OF NURSING AND HEALTH SCIENCES
OFFICE OF THE DEAN

February 6, 2016

Dear Senator Jeannette White,

I am writing to provide my support of S.217, which will completely transfer from the Agency of Education to the Office of Professional Regulation (OPR) the licensure of professions already regulated by the office, specifically the profession of speech-language pathology and audiology. I am submitting my comments as a certified speech-language pathologist for more than 35 years with a long held provisional education license from the Vermont Department of Education until the recent transfer to OPR; one of about 100 board certified specialists in child language; and as the former Vice President for Standards and Ethics in Speech-Language Pathology (2008-2010) and President-Elect, President, Immediate Past President (2012-2014) for the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association—our national professional organization of more than 180,000 members nationwide located in Rockville, MD. In the past, I also have practiced as a speech-language pathologist in school, clinic, hospital, and private practice settings. My current position is Professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders and Dean of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences at the University of Vermont. In my role as Dean, I have ultimate oversight of the preparation of our practitioners, including speech-language pathologists, so they have the content knowledge and clinical experience they need to practice in all settings including schools. The intent of this bill is particularly relevant to my profession, to our Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, and to our College of Nursing and Health Sciences as we prepare graduate students in speech-language pathology to be licensed to practice and serve individuals with communication disorders across the lifespan.

It is important to understand that students in speech-language pathology are prepared as generalists meeting standards for knowledge and skills across nine areas of communication function including articulation, fluency, voice and resonance, receptive and expressive language, hearing, swallowing, cognitive aspects of communication, social aspects of communication, and augmentative and alternative communication. When they graduate they have basic competence in all of these areas and can use their knowledge and skills in assessment and intervention across all populations and settings. Having one regulating body that understands expectations for competence and the scope of practice in speech-language pathology is efficient and cost effective for both the consumers and the agencies involved. Setting for practice is less relevant as speech-language pathologists are educated to provide high quality, best practice services across all settings, including schools. Students take, as part of their curriculum, courses that prepare them to work in school settings and all have clinical practicum experiences in a variety of settings, including schools. Dual licensing requirements, both from OPR and the DOE, therefore, do not add value to the constituency we serve and are more costly for the professional and for the agencies involved. Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective. I am happy to answer any additional questions you might have. I can be contacted at (802) 656-2529 or at patricia.prelock@med.uvm.edu.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia A. Prelock". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

Patricia A. Prelock, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, BCS-CL
Dean, College of Nursing and Health Sciences
Professor, Communication Sciences & Disorders
Professor, Pediatrics, College of Medicine
Past President, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2013)