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Lisa Durstin, Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)
Vermont Speech-Language Hearing Association (VSHA)
House Education Committee

Thank you for inviting me to testify before you today about S.130. My name is Lisa Durstin and I am a speech-language pathologist. I have worked in the medical setting and in schools as both an employee and a contracted provider. I will be brief; there are just a few important points I would like to make regarding this bill's effort to split the profession of speech-language pathologists:

- First and foremost, all speech-language pathologists are provided with essentially the same education and training. We are not educated or trained to work in one setting, such as a school, a hospital, a skilled nursing facility, a preschool, a home, rehab, or a clinic. We graduate as generalists with specialized knowledge in speech-language pathology. Our practice setting, the additional skills we require, and the way we practice evolve after graduation. We teach in whatever setting we are working in, but we do it in a specialized way, tailored to the population served.
- VSHA polled SLPs in the state and they sent us a resounding message that they were opposed to splitting the profession in any way. A number of them work in multiple settings and would still need to have two licenses.
- Licensing through the Office of Professional Regulation has proven to be easy and efficient. The current licensing process through the Agency of Education has resulted in confusion. SLPs are reporting they have waited as long as four months for a license renewal from AOE. No one at the Agency of Education can explain to the many SLPs whose Level II licenses have been "downgraded" to a Level I license and not yet restored why they have been shown this disrespect.
- The Office of Professional Regulation has made assurances that any fee issues can be resolved, and that any standards of practice that the AOE requires can be upheld.
- And finally, our national association, the American Speech-Language Hearing Association, strongly advocates for universal licensure.

I ask that you give serious consideration to this bill. It is detrimental to our profession. It further endangers the shortage of SLPs that already exists.

Thank you.