

Testimony of the Board of Speech Pathology and Audiology

**Before the
House Committee on Health
and
House Committee on Intrastate Commerce
Tuesday, February 12, 2019
8:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 329**

**On the following measure:
H.B. 252, RELATING TO SPEECH PATHOLOGY**

Chair Mizuno, Chair Ohno, and Members of the Committees:

My name is Christopher Fernandez, and I am the Executive Officer of the Board of Speech Pathology and Audiology (Board). The Board supports this bill.

The purposes of this bill are to: (1) establish a provisional license for speech pathologists; (2) specify the requirements for a provisional license; and (3) limit the validity of the provisional license to one year with the ability to renew the provisional license for an additional one year if needed to fulfill the requirements of Hawaii Revised Statutes section 468E-5.

This provisional license would allow candidates for licensure to practice under the guidance of an American Speech-Language-Hearing Association certified supervisor. The Board believes that this would enhance the quality of supervision and therefore ensure public safety. The Board also acknowledges that individuals who apply for the provisional license should be those working towards eligibility for permanent licensure. Thus, the Board agrees that the term of the provisional license should be for a one-year period, with a possible extension of an additional year.

For the Committees' information, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health heard the bill on February 7, 2019, and passed it unamended.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

HB-252

Submitted on: 2/7/2019 8:01:58 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Elena Cabatu	Hilo Medical Center	Support	No

Comments:

Please accept this organizational support for HB 252.



February 12, 2019 at 8:30 am
Conference Room 329

House Committee on Health
House Committee on Intrastate Commerce

To: Chair John M. Mizuno
Vice Chair Bertrand Kobayashi

Chair Takashi Ohno
Vice Chair Dale T. Kobayashi

From: Paige Heckathorn Choy
Director of Government Affairs
Healthcare Association of Hawaii

Re: Testimony in Support
HB 252, Relating to Speech Pathology

The Healthcare Association of Hawaii (HAH), established in 1939, serves as the leading voice of healthcare on behalf of 170 member organizations who represent almost every aspect of the health care continuum in Hawaii. Members include acute care hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, home health agencies, hospices, assisted living facilities and durable medical equipment suppliers. In addition to providing access to appropriate, affordable, high quality care to all of Hawaii's residents, our members contribute significantly to Hawaii's economy by employing over 20,000 people statewide.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure. There is a shortage of speech language pathologists (SLPs) to serve in medical settings, which is likely in part because Hawaii is in the minority of states that do not issue a provisional license. (There are 42 states that issue a provisional license, with one more state in the process of implementing the law.)

The reason that provisional licenses are important is because SLPs must complete a clinical fellowship for a year to obtain their Certificate of Clinical Competence. As noted, Hawaii is one of the few states that does not have a provisional or temporary license during that clinical fellowship year. Unfortunately, without that provisional license, these fellows cannot bill Medicare and some other insurance providers for patient services provided under the direct supervision of a licensed SLP. This means that there are fewer Hawaii-based opportunities for SLP fellows, who often then go to the mainland for their training. This law would help to provide more opportunities for students to get training in Hawaii-based settings and help to increase access to needed services.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this legislation.

HB-252

Submitted on: 2/11/2019 7:32:07 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kristine K Noel	HSHA	Support	No

Comments:

February 11, 2019

House Committee on Intrastate Commerce

House Committee on Health

Hawaii State Capitol, Room 329

Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: House Bill 252: Relating to Speech Pathology

Dear Members of the House Committees on Health and Intrastate Commerce:

On behalf of the Hawai'i Speech-Language Hearing Association, I write in support of the proposed provisional license for speech pathologists in HB 252.

The Hawai'i Speech-Language Hearing Association (HSHA) is a professional, non-profit organization of speech-language pathologists and audiologists that advocates for and promotes excellence in the professions of speech-language pathology and audiology, to provide quality services, that embrace the diversity of the people we serve. We strongly support HB 252, relating to speech pathology, which would provide a provisional license for individuals completing the clinical fellowship, the transitional period for graduates who are completing their mentored professional experience before becoming eligible for initial license.

Without a provisional license, clinical fellows (CFs) do not qualify under federal regulations (42 CFR, Ch. IV, Sec. 440.120(iii)) to provide services to individuals with communication disorders. In addition, services they provide are not billable through many insurances. This has several negative outcomes including, a shortage of speech-language pathologists delaying needed services, and a lack of job opportunities in

Hawai'i for clinical fellows after graduating from accredited universities. Of particular concern is the fact that Hawai'i is losing talented graduates Hawai'i, who wish to stay in Hawai'i and service our community, to the mainland as they seek job opportunities not available in Hawai'i.

HSHA has had many graduate students reach out to our organization expressing their interest in the medical field and employment in medical settings. However, in Hawai'i these experiences must be delayed until their clinical fellowship is completed. At that time, they have missed valuable clinical and professional experiences with certain disorders, making the transition into the medical field less likely once licensed. In addition, after spending a year on the mainland completing their CF, many choose to stay and not return to Hawaii. This also contributes to Hawaii's shortage of speech pathologists working in medical settings.

Hawai'i is one of the few states that does not provide a provisional license to clinical fellows. Passing HB 252 will have a direct effect on the number of speech pathologists that may be employed, which will then directly impact consumer access to necessary speech-language pathology services. We, the members of HSHA, strongly support the passage of HB 252. We urge the House Committee on Health and Intra-state Commerce to pass HB 252 and give the patients of Hawai'i, their families, and their communities immediate access to speech language pathology services. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 252. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact me at noelkris@hawaii.edu.

Sincerely,

Kristine K. Noel, PhD, CCC-SLP

President

Hawai'i Speech-Language Hearing Association

HB-252

Submitted on: 2/10/2019 9:59:09 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Candy Bartlett	Aegis Therapies	Support	No

Comments:

Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair

Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair

Committee on Health

Monday, February 11, 2019

Support for HB 252

Aegis Therapies, headquartered in Frisco, TX, is a provider of contract therapy services to patients in multiple states around the country, and proudly provides speech therapy services to patients in Hawaii. We strongly support HB 252.

Like other medical professionals, speech-language pathologists must be licensed through a state licensing authority in order to practice their specialty. The licensing process helps to establish and maintain high standards for licensure candidacy and practice. It also assures the public that practitioners have been through a thorough vetting process that involves qualifying candidates through education, supervised experience and examination. A component of the academic training for all Speech-Language Pathologists to be credentialed for the American Speech-Language and Hearing Association is to complete a 9 month Clinical Fellowship.

HB 252 would permit properly trained speech language pathologists to provide services to patients under a provisional license of up to one year, but only under the supervision of a therapist appropriately licensed by the state of Hawaii. This measure would establish a Provisional License for speech language pathologists during their supervised clinical fellowship. It will address the shortage of such professionals in today's market and provide quicker and more widely available access to speech therapy to Hawaiian patients. Hawaii is one of few states nationally that do not provide provisional licensure for speech language pathologists. Individuals needing to complete their clinical fellowship are often forced to migrate to the mainland to do because of the lack of provisional licensure in Hawaii.

Oversight and licensure of speech language pathologists in Hawaii is provided by the Board of Speech Pathology and Audiology. We understand that the Board was fully briefed on the provisions of this bill at their most recent meeting and does not oppose its passage.

The practice of speech language pathology in Hawaii and the patients receiving such services will be greatly enhanced by passage of this legislation, which does not require the expenditure of state dollars. We urge you to vote yes for HB 252.



3- 3420 Kuhio Highway, Suite 300 • Lihue, HI 96766

House Committee on Health

To: Chair John Mizuno
Vice Chair Bertrand Kobayashi

From: Kurt Akamine
Vice President
Ohana Pacific Management Company

Re: **Testimony in Support**
HB 252, Relating to Speech Pathology

Ohana Pacific Management Company, Inc. (OPMC) owns and operates five post-acute care facilities servicing more than 500 patients on Oahu and Kauai as well as an adult day health program and home health agency on Kauai.

I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 252, which would provide a provisional license for clinical fellows.

Without a provisional license, Speech Language Pathology (SLP) clinical fellows (CFs) cannot bill most insurances for their services. As such, we have a shortage of speech therapists delaying needed services, lack of job opportunities for CFs when graduating from accredited universities. We are losing talented graduates from the University of Hawaii to the mainland. These graduates seek job opportunities there rather than staying in Hawaii.

There are only four states that does not provide a provisional license to CFs and three of those states are actively working to address this situation. HB 252 is very important for Hawaii. It will have a direct effect on the amount of available speech pathologists, which will then directly impact our Hawaii resident's access to necessary speech pathology services. I respectfully ask for your support in passing this measure.

HB-252

Submitted on: 2/7/2019 10:00:46 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Joanne Allagonez	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in **strong support** of HB 252 (Relating to Speech Pathology), which would provide a provisional license for speech-language pathologists during their clinical fellowship.

Currently, Hawai'i is one of the few states that do not offer licensure to Clinical Fellows, who are transitioning from being a speech-language pathology student to being a provider. When Clinical Fellows are not licensed, they are often not recognized as qualified clinicians for the purposes of reimbursement and are therefore unable to bill Medicare and most insurance companies.

The lack of a provisional license for Clinical Fellows also negatively impacts the shortage of speech-language pathologists here in Hawai'i, especially in the medical field, as recent graduates are more likely to look for jobs in states that offer licensure.

Passing HB 252 would have positive effects in Hawai'i, including increasing the number of providers for speech-language services and growing our employment opportunities for recent graduates. This will improve our community resources and allow speech-language pathologists to provide faster, better quality services to adults and children in need of speech-language services in the state of Hawai'i.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of HB 252.

Sincerely,

Joanne Allagonez, M.S., CCC-SLP

Speech-Language Pathologist

HB-252

Submitted on: 2/6/2019 8:22:18 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Matthew Muranaka	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am writing this testimony in support of S.B. No. 307, Relating to Speech Pathology, which would provide a provisional license for clinical fellows (CF). There is a shortage of speech-language pathologists in the medical field state-wide in Hawaii due to clinical fellows not able to bill Medicare and most insurance companies. This deficiency creates a delay in services for our patients with speech therapy needs. Passing S.B. 307 would only have positive effects on growing our employment opportunities for recent graduates, providing faster, better quality services to patients and improving our community resources.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify and hearing my voice on this important issue.

HB-252

Submitted on: 2/8/2019 6:44:38 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Susan Okamura	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

*I am writing this testimony **in support of HB 252**, Relating to Speech Pathology, which would provide a provisional license for clinical fellows (CF). There is a shortage of speech-language pathologists in the medical field state-wide in Hawaii due to clinical fellows not able to bill Medicare and most insurance companies. This deficiency creates a delay in services for our patients with speech therapy needs. Passing HB 252 would only have positive effects on growing our employment opportunities for recent graduates, providing faster, better quality services to patients and improving our community resources.*

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify and hearing my voice on this important issue.

Thank you!

Susan Okamura, Speech-Language Pathologist

SLP License #285

HB-252

Submitted on: 2/9/2019 8:30:32 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Sharon Nichols	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

*****Please support HB 252*****

Dear Representative Thielen,

As constituent in your District for many years, I have seen you support bills that make sense and make a difference in our community and our state. Specifically, I am writing this testimony in support of HB 252, Relating to Speech Pathology, which would provide a provisional license for clinical fellows (CF). There is a shortage of speech-language pathologists in the medical field state-wide in Hawaii due to clinical fellows not able to bill Medicare and most insurance companies. This deficiency creates a delay in services for our patients with speech therapy needs. Passing HB 252 would only have positive effects on growing our employment opportunities for recent graduates, providing faster, better quality services to patients and improving our community resources.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify and hearing my voice on this important issue.

Thank you!

Sharon Nichols

HB-252

Submitted on: 2/9/2019 10:04:33 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Yuejiao Liu	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am writing this testimony to support HB 252, relating to speech language pathologist, which would provide a provisional license for clinical fellows (CF). There is a shortage of speech-language pathologists in the medical field in Hawaii due to clinical fellows not able to bill Medicare and most insurance companies. This deficiency creates a delay in services for our patients with speech therapy needs. Passing HB 252 would only have positive effects on growing our employment opportunities for recent graduates. This will also provide faster and better quality services to patients and improve our community resources.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify and voice my opinion.

Yuejiao "Rachel" Liu

Speech Language Pathologist

Hawaii DOE

I moved from Minnesota to Hawaii three years ago. In these three years I have felt a strong sense of home and I've fallen in love with the culture and the people of Hawaii. As a future Speech-Language Pathologist I want to stay here and give back to the people of Hawaii. Unfortunately, Hawaii does not offer a provisional license for recent SLP graduates in the medical setting and many of us have to travel back to the mainland to obtain supervision in order to complete our licensure. With many of us leaving Hawaii to move to the mainland after graduation it leaves the state with a shortage of knowledgeable and dedicated SLPs. This licensure would allow University of Hawaii graduates who have become familiar with the state, many cultures, and laws to gain the training we need to gain our credentials here in Hawaii and start our careers as fully licensed SLPs.

HB-252

Submitted on: 2/9/2019 4:17:07 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kerry McGrath	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am writing this testimony in support of HB 252, Relating to Speech Pathology, which would provide a provisional license for clinical fellows (CF). There is a shortage of speech-language pathologists in the medical field state-wide in Hawaii due to clinical fellows not able to bill Medicare and most insurance companies. This deficiency creates a delay in services for our patients with speech therapy needs. Passing HB 252 would only have positive effects on growing our employment opportunities for recent graduates, providing faster, better quality services to patients and improving our community resources.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify and hearing my voice on this important issue.

HB-252

Submitted on: 2/9/2019 4:30:34 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kayla Kawamura	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am writing this testimony as a speech pathology graduate student in support of HB 252, which would provide a provisional license for clinical fellows (CF). There is a shortage of speech-language pathologists in the medical field state-wide in Hawaii due to clinical fellows not able to bill Medicare and most insurance companies. This deficiency creates a delay in services for our patients with speech therapy needs. Passing HB 252 would only have positive effects on growing our employment opportunities for recent graduates, providing faster, better quality services to patients and improving our community resources.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify and hearing my voice on this important issue.

HB-252

Submitted on: 2/9/2019 6:43:25 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Marci Kometani	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Hello, my name is Marci Kometani and I am a graduate student in the University of Hawaii Manoa Communication Sciences and Disorders program.

I am writing this testimony in support of HB 252, Relating to Speech Pathology, which would provide a provisional license for clinical fellows (CF). There is a shortage of speech-language pathologists in the medical field state-wide in Hawaii due to clinical fellows not able to bill Medicare and most insurance companies. This deficiency creates a delay in services for our patients with speech therapy needs. Passing HB 252 would only have positive effects on growing our employment opportunities for recent graduates, providing faster, better quality services to patients and improving our community resources.

I will be graduating from University of Hawaii Manoa this year with a master's in speech-language pathology. As a resident of Hawaii, my desire is to stay here on island to pursue a career in speech-language pathology and serve the community I grew up in. Passing HB 252 would open the door for more employment opportunities and experiences that I would not have to leave home for.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify and for hearing my voice on this important issue.

HB-252

Submitted on: 2/10/2019 10:56:30 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Tanya Sasaoka	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair

Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair

House Committee on Health

Representative Takashi Ohno, Chair

Representative Dale T. Kobayashi, Vice Chair

House Committee on Intrastate Commerce

Tuesday, February 12, 2019

Support of H.B. No. 252, Relating to Speech Pathology

I am writing this testimony in support of H.B. No.252, Relating to Speech Pathology, which would provide a provisional license for clinical fellows (CF). There is a shortage of speech-language pathologists in the medical field state-wide in Hawaii due to clinical fellows not able to bill Medicare and most insurance companies. This deficiency creates a delay in services for our patients with speech therapy needs. Passing H.B. 252 would only have positive effects on growing our employment opportunities for recent graduates, providing faster, better quality services to patients and improving our community resources.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify and hearing my voice on this important issue.

HB-252

Submitted on: 2/11/2019 2:31:59 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Ashley Mitchell	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am writing in support of H.B. 252, Relating to Speech Pathology, which would provide a provisional license for clinical fellows (CF). Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) provide care to a wide range of people, from keiki to kupuna, in a variety of settings, including medical settings. Having grown up in Hawaii, my decision to earn my degree at the University of Hawaii at Manoa was part of my hope to live and work in my home state as a medical SLP. But, without a provisional license, provided by this bill, allowing speech-language pathology graduates to fulfill our clinical fellowship in a medical setting, I, along with my cohort and future graduates, are faced with the tough decision of leaving Hawaii so we can gain experience. The population needing SLP services in a medical setting is increasing, especially with the growing elderly population, but the supply of SLPs is not keeping up with the demand. This is a rhetoric shared throughout Hawaii, leaving a shortage of qualified healthcare professionals to provide quality care to the people of Hawaii. Passing H.B. 252 would lessen caseloads and professional burnout for SLPs as well as provide better quality services to patients.

Ashley M.

Graduate Student

University of Hawaii Manoa - CSD â,,... 2020

HB-252

Submitted on: 2/11/2019 6:36:08 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Erin Firmin	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I strongly support of SB 307, Relating to Speech Pathology, which would provide a provisional license for Clinical Fellows (CF). There is a shortage of speech-language pathologists state-wide in Hawaii. Many health care systems are unable to hire clinical fellows because they are not able to bill Medicare and most insurance companies. This deficiency creates a delay in services for our patients with speech therapy needs. Passing SB 307 would only have positive effects on growing our employment opportunities for recent graduates and would provide quicker access to quality services for patients, improving our community resources.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify and hearing my voice on this important issue.

HB-252

Submitted on: 2/8/2019 9:00:38 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Leah Paulino	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am writing this testimony in support of HB 252, Relating to Speech Pathology, which would provide a provisional license for clinical fellows (CF). There is a shortage of speech-language pathologists in the medical field state-wide in Hawaii due to clinical fellows not able to bill Medicare and most insurance companies. This deficiency creates a delay in services for our patients with speech therapy needs. Passing HB 252 would only have positive effects on growing our employment opportunities for recent graduates, providing faster, better quality services to patients and improving our community resources.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify and hearing my voice on this important issue.

Thank you!

Leah Paulino

HB-252

Submitted on: 2/11/2019 8:50:11 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Patricia Blair	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am writing this testimony in support of HB 252, Relating to Speech Pathology, which would provide a provisional license for clinical fellows (CF). There is a shortage of speech-language pathologists in the medical field state-wide in Hawaii due to clinical fellows not able to bill Medicare and most insurance companies. This deficiency creates a delay in services for our patients with speech therapy needs. Passing HB 252 would only have positive effects on growing our employment opportunities for recent graduates, providing faster, better quality services to patients and improving our community resources.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify and hearing my voice on this important issue.

HB-252

Submitted on: 2/11/2019 12:55:26 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Makayla Coyle	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am writing this testimony in support of H.B. No. 252. As a speech-language pathology graduate student coming to Hawaii from a small town in Indiana, it was always my hope to be able to give back and serve the people of this community, as they not only played an integral role in my education here but have also shown me the true meaning of ohana. Unfortunately, without the possibility of obtaining my Clinical Fellowship Year in a medical setting in the state of Hawaii, it will force me, along with many other graduate speech pathology students to move back to the mainland. Medical professionals are becoming a farce, and the need for medical speech-language pathologists on the islands is growing at a rapid pace. However, by not allowing us the opportunity to attain our CFY here in a medical setting, it is forcing us to get our education elsewhere, leaving the islands with no intent on returning. By passing this bill we can truly give back to the wonderful people of Hawaii, in addition to educating and keeping the young professionals, such as myself, my cohort, and all of the speech-language pathology graduate students before us that this state has invested invaluable amounts of time, resources, and financial aid into.

Makayla C.

Graduate Student

University of Hawaii Manoa- CSD â„‚... 2020

HB-252

Submitted on: 2/11/2019 12:58:18 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Nicole Roberts	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am writing this testimony in support of H.B. No. 252, Relating to Speech Pathology, which would provide a provisional license for clinical fellows (CF). I am currently a graduate student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Although new to the state of Hawaii this bill is extremely important, not only to my cohort and myself, but to the community as well. Access to medically trained speech-language pathologists is limited state-wide because after completing our graduate programs we are unable to obtain medical fellowships in Hawaii. Due to the lack of medical opportunities young professionals, like myself, move to other states to get the experience our field requires. Unfortunately, my husband is in the military and I cannot leave the state to seek out other fellowship opportunities. I chose a career in speech-language pathology in order to help people. In medical settings patients are the most vulnerable and need the most support. I would love to be the person by their bedside aiding in their recovery. On paper speech-language pathologists treat communication and swallowing disorders, which is amazing and can make a world of difference to a patient and their families, but there is also another side most people don't see. We are a support system to these patients. On days when they feel like recovery is out of reach we are their cheerleaders, a listening ear, and a shoulder to cry on. All we ask for the opportunity to make a difference in this amazing state we all call home.

Nicole R.

Graduate Student

University of Hawaii Manoa - CSD â„... 2020

LATE

Aloha State Legislators,

My name is Gabrielle Berce, I am a 24 year old Maui native and 2018 graduate of the John A. Burns School of Medicine, Masters of Communication Sciences and Disorders program. I am writing this testimony in support of *HB 252*, not just as a clinical fellow of speech-language pathology, but also as a concerned Hawai'i resident interested in providing jobs to qualified local residents and quality care for the members of my community.

My life has been so deeply rooted in my community, and my passion to help others fueled my desire to become a practicing speech pathologist in my home state of Hawai'i in hopes of giving back to the community that raised me. Passing *HB 252* will grant clinical fellows such as myself, the tools and experiences necessary to become a licensed therapist and practice across a wide variety of settings. Currently, clinical fellows such as myself are only allowed to practice in the education setting (e.g., the Department of Education). This limits the options available to finding a clinical fellowship experience that suits ones goals and aspirations. That being said, for the 15 members of my graduating cohort, many including myself dreamt of working beyond the school setting. Eight of the 15 students have pursued their dream by returning to the mainland to practice. It is not uncommon for therapists and Hawai'i residents alike to move away from Hawai'i in hopes of pursuing their dreams. Therefore, it is important for local residents such as myself, to be given the opportunity to follow our dreams without leaving the islands.

To be frank, the demand for speech pathologists across all settings are not being met. The Department of Education is short on therapists throughout the islands, however the job requirements are far more attainable than the medical field in which a minimum of one year experience in the medical setting is often required. Without the passing of *HB 252*, therapists are unable to meet this minimum requirement, which often times forces the medical setting to search for therapists from abroad to move to Hawai'i and treat their patients. The downfall is that many of these therapists often return to the mainland within a few years as they are unable to adapt to the cost of living and the realities of Hawai'i's lifestyle. Thus repeating the cycle of hiring therapists from abroad. Whereas having access to clinical fellowship experiences in the medical setting thanks to *HB 252* will allow local therapists such as myself, the ability to practice in the medical field and end the mainland hiring cycle. This is also important for the patients that will be affected by this bill such as our kupuna who deserve continuity of care without worrying about new providers constantly rotating through. Based upon my brief externship working at the Kaiser outpatient clinic on Maui, patients deserve local therapists who have gained quality experiences that the bill can provide, and who can better relate to and understand the unique qualities of Hawai'i's residents.

I humbly ask for your assistance in granting future clinical fellows the opportunity to practice across a variety of settings. May I kindly remind you that according to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Hawai'i is one of roughly 6 states remaining that do not allow for a provisional license to practice. Even with this bill, clinical fellows will continue to be mentored by some of the states finest therapists in the field. This bill will only allow us to gain more mana'o and provide to more of our local community.

Yours respectfully,

Gabrielle Berce