

# ELITE HEARING

of Colorado Springs

719-633-2685

October 16, 2023

Daniel Rosenthal, PE (Chair)  
Hearing Care Professionals Technical Review Committee  
Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services  
Attn: Ron Briel, Credentialing Review  
PO Box 94986  
Lincoln, NE 68509-4986  
*Sent via e-mail*

I hope this letter and request find you well. I am a licensed Doctor of Audiology and private practice owner in Colorado. I am writing to strongly oppose the scope of practice expansion proposal offered by certain hearing instrument specialists (HIS), affiliated trade organizations, hearing aid manufacturers, distributors, and franchisees, all of whom stand to gain financially from its implementation. If passed, this will authorize HIS to perform audiologic diagnostic testing, interpretation, and treatment services, without appropriate training, qualifications, and supervision, putting Nebraskans of all ages at significant risk of financial and physical harm with less than optimal treatment outcomes. This ruling effects Audiologists in Colorado because of the interstate compact.

Audiologic services, including diagnostic services, cerumen management, tinnitus evaluation and treatment, and aural rehabilitation are complex procedures that require extensive clinical training. To receive my doctorate degree to provide these services, I spent 4 years beyond my undergraduate and I continue to take a plethora of classes for CEU to better understand the depths of knowledge and best practices in these niche areas of Audiology. Yet, the HIS proposal includes a list of proposed educational requirements for licensure that 'grandfather' existing HIS' with no increase in training. Upon inspection, the requirements for new HIS simply maintains the status quo (must be 21 years of age and have a high school education). Further, the proposal allows the educational requirements to be changed arbitrarily at the discretion of the Board.

The requested scope expansion in the HIS proposal does not line up with evidence-based practices in the delivery of audiologic care, particularly when evaluated against the licensing and training requirements for similar and related professions. A clinical doctorate (Au.D.) degree is required for audiologists to enter clinical practice in Nebraska and all 50 U.S. states and territories. Physicians and advanced practice providers including nurse practitioners, physician assistants, psychologists, and speech language pathologists are other professionals who are authorized under their licensure to perform these services (in whole or in part).

The HIS proposal is incongruent with current scope of practice and educational requirements for audiology assistants in Nebraska. Even though Nebraska requires postsecondary education for registered audiology assistants, they are still not authorized to perform any of the audiologic diagnostic and treatment services described in the HIS proposal. The audiology assistant's scope of practice is limited because the clinical education required for patient safety and outcomes is limited, just like the HIS certification is limited and therefore scope of practice needs to remain limited to hearing aid dispensing.

Occupational licensure laws are designed to protect consumers—not to unfairly protect and advantage industry players seeking only to profit. I urge the Hearing Care Technical Review Committee to reject the HIS scope expansion proposal in its entirety. Please contact me if you have any questions, or if I can provide any additional information or expert testimony.

Respectfully,

Nichole Kovel, AUD, ADA/AAA