

February 17, 2025

Chair Deb Patterson  
900 Court St. NE, S-411  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: **SB 943** Relating to Audiology; Creating New Provisions  
Position: **Support**

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, and members of the committee,

I am writing to you as a licensed clinical audiologist who serves Oregonians and is an Oregonian himself. I beseech your support for SB 943. This critical legislation will help alleviate the strain on our overloaded medical system by allowing audiologists to practice in a way that is consistent with their education and training. Support of this bill will ensure that your constituency has access to high-quality hearing health care with minimal administrative redundancy.

Audiologists earn a clinical doctorate as the entry-level degree of our profession, receiving extensive education and hands-on training in the evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment of hearing and balance disorders. This is irrespective of age, and area of residence within the state of Oregon. Along with diagnosing and treating an array of conditions, doctors of audiology are also responsible for triaging patients to physicians when indicated.

SB 943 will provide sensible updates to licensure statutes, thereby ensuring that patients get the services and timely referrals that they need from audiologists, which is especially important when patient needs fall outside of the audiologic scope of practice. The bill will increase access, affordability, and quality of care for all Oregonians.

#### Outdated Licensure Statutes

- Oregon's current audiology licensure statutes are outdated and vague, leading to uncertainty and reluctance to perform tests and interventions for which we have received training.
- Even tests like basic health screenings, which are routinely performed by medical assistants and smartphone apps are not expressly in the scope of audiologic practice. The auditory and vestibular systems are complexly interconnected with the rest of the body, creating necessity for audiologic expertise.
- SB 943 clarifies statute language to ensure health screenings and other procedures which audiologists are trained to perform are clearly written in our scope of practice.

#### Aligning Scope with Skills

- Like many states, Oregon is facing a shortage of primary care and specialist physicians, leading to long and burdensome wait times to consult other providers like otolaryngologists (ENTs).
- Through their doctoral education, audiologists are trained in identifying the “red flag” signs of lesions of the central auditory/vestibular system and triaging patients who require further evaluation.
- Audiologists are also trained extensively in genetic causes of hearing loss, often being the first providers to identify these losses and work with families to create treatment plans. These include IEP and 504 plans for educational success of our citizens with hearing loss.
- SB 943 would grant audiologists ordering rights for medical imaging and lab work. This would improve patient wait times by reducing the need for redundant appointments, and it would also allow earlier identification of otologic conditions. Early identification of conditions allows providers to begin treatment planning urgently and make well-informed referrals to other medical specialists.

#### Better Utilizing Clinic Resources

- Current statutes allow audiology assistants to conduct basic hearing tests under the supervision of physicians or naturopathic physicians, but not audiologists who specialize in assessment of human hearing.
- Allowing audiologists to supervise audiology assistants for basic hearing tests would allow audiologists to spend more of their time focusing on more complex patient cases and engaging in aural/vestibular rehabilitation for affected individuals.
- SB 943 would amend statute language to allow this type of careful supervision of audiology assistants under their license.

SB 943 offers a clear and safe path to improved patient care, reduced burden and cost to the medical system from delayed and unnecessary appointments, and a system where all involved medical professionals are free to practice at the top of their knowledge and training. These impacts will only be amplified for rural and otherwise underserved patients in our communities.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and support of this bill,

**Jerae Bryant**  
Doctor of Audiology  
**Oregon Clinic ENT West**