

February 20, 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 audiologist and an Oregonian to ask you to support SB 943. This vital legislation will help alleviate strain on our overloaded medical system by allowing audiologists to practice in a way that is consistent with their education and training. Your support of this bill will ensure that every Oregonian has timely access to quality hearing health care.

Currently, outdated regulations limit the ability of audiologists to fully utilize their expertise, often requiring unnecessary referrals that delay patient care and increase healthcare costs. SB 943 addresses this issue by updating the legal definitions of audiology practice, allowing audiologists to provide services they are extensively trained to perform.

The Rigorous Education and Training of Audiologists

The Doctor of Audiology (Au.D.) degree is a post-baccalaureate doctoral program that involves:

- **Three to Four years of intensive graduate education**, covering auditory and vestibular sciences, acoustics, neurology, pharmacology, genetics, amplification technology, and patient-centered rehabilitation strategies (and sometimes more dependent on the audiology program).
- **Over 1800 hours of supervised clinical experience**, where audiologists gain hands-on expertise in diagnostic evaluations, hearing aid and cochlear implant programming, vestibular and balance assessments, tinnitus management, auditory processing evaluation and management, and more.,
- **Comprehensive board examinations** to ensure proficiency in evaluating and treating hearing and balance disorders.

Why Expanding Scope of Practice Matters

- **Improving patient access to care** – many patients, especially in rural areas, face long wait times or unnecessary specialist referrals for basic procedures like cerumen removal or balance assessments. Allowing audiologists to perform these services streamlines care and reduces healthcare barriers.

- **Reducing healthcare costs** – Direct access to audiologists for hearing and balance disorders minimizes the need for costly specialist visits and unnecessary medical interventions.
- **Addressing workforce shortages** – Oregon is facing a growing demand for hearing healthcare professionals, particularly with an aging population. Expanding audiologists' scope of practice ensures that patients receive timely care without overwhelming other healthcare providers.
- **Enhancing consumer protections** – Updating the legal definition of audiology ensures that only licensed professionals with doctoral-level training provide hearing and balance care, protecting Oregonians from misleading or substandard services.

By passing SB 943, the Oregon Legislature can modernize hearing healthcare laws, acknowledge the expertise of audiologists, and improve access to essential services for thousands of Oregonians. I urge you to support this bill and advocate for its passage.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Luke Hinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Luke" and last name "Hinson" clearly distinguishable.

Luke Hinson, Au.D.
Doctor of Audiology
OHSU – Instructor and Clinical Audiologist