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TESTIMONY

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HOUSE BILL 2591: IMPROVING LICENSING REQUIREMENTS FOR SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS

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Testimony before the Missouri Professional Registration and Licensing Committee

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THIS COMMITTEE

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Avery Frank. I am a senior policy analyst at the Show-Me Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan, Missouri-based think tank that advances sensible, well-researched, free-market solutions to state and local policy issues. The ideas presented here are my own and are offered in consideration of making Missouri a better place to work and live.

Taking Every Step to Help People Do the Work They Want to Do

HB 2591 is a straightforward bill that makes one targeted change to the licensing requirements for aspiring speech-language pathologists.

Under current statute, an applicant must present written evidence of completion of a clinical fellowship from supervisors, and the period of employment shall be under the direct supervision of a "person who is licensed by the state of Missouri in the profession in which the applicant seeks to be licensed." This requirement is rigid and inconsistent with the flexible and more reasonable licensing environment Missouri has been working to cultivate.

If Missouri already trusts licensed professionals from other states to provide services once they move here, it follows that we should also trust licensed professionals from other states to supervise a clinical fellowship. There is no clear public-safety or product-quality justification for restricting supervision solely to Missouri-licensed practitioners.

HB 2591 updates the statute to require that the period of employment be completed under the direct supervision of a licensed speech-language pathologist in good standing, regardless of whether the fellowship occurred inside or outside Missouri. This is a commonsense reform that removes unnecessary red tape and better aligns with our nation-leading licensing reciprocity regime.

Missouri Should Continue to Lead in Licensing Reform

With every single occupational license, there are real costs: higher prices for consumers, higher barriers to entry for workers (resulting in fewer providers), reduced innovation, and loss of time and money for licensees.[1] The central question in occupational licensing is whether these costs are justified by clear and demonstrable benefits to public safety or product quality.

In many cases, the evidence suggests they are not. The Mercatus Center at George Mason University conducted a meta-analysis of 19 different studies directly related to licensing and product quality. Only 16 percent of those studies found positive relationships.[2] The weakness of this connection has contributed to nationwide momentum toward reducing unnecessary red tape and reforming existing licensing regimes.

Missouri has been ahead of the curve. In 2020 the state established a universal licensing reciprocity regime, allowing licensed professionals from other states to have Missouri requirements waived when they relocate here.[3] Last session, Senate Bill 150 strengthened that regime by removing the "compact exception," a loophole that had allowed certain interstate compacts to supersede our existing licensing regime.[4]

House Bill 2591 represents an opportunity for Missouri to continue leading on occupational licensing reform. There is little reason to believe that applicants who complete a clinical fellowship under a Missouri-licensed supervisor are safer or more proficient practitioners than those supervised by a qualified professional licensed in another state. When a requirement functions as a barrier rather than a safeguard, it should be reconsidered and in many cases discarded. For these reasons, HB 2591 would help make Missouri a better place to work and live.

NOTES

1. Farronato, Chiara, et al. "Consumer protection in an online world: An analysis of occupational licensing." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, vol. 16, no. 3, 1 July 2024, pp. 549–579, https://doi.org/10.1257/app.20210716; Makridis, Christos A., and Patrick A. McLaughlin. "Re-evaluating the labor market effects of occupational licensing: Longitudinal evidence across states." *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, vol. 12, no. 1, 22 Feb. 2025, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-04497-5; U.S. Department of the Treasury Office of Economic Policy, Council of Economic Advisers, and U.S. Department of Labor. *Occupational Licensing: A Framework for Policymakers*. The White House, 2015. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/licensing_report_final_nonembargo.pdf.

2. McLaughlin, Patrick A., et al. "Regulatory reform in Florida: An opportunity for greater competitiveness and economic efficiency." *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 7 June 2018, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3191351.

3. *The 2026 Blueprint: Moving Missouri Forward*, Show-Me Institute, 12 Nov. 2025, www.showmeinstitute.org/publication/blueprint-for-missouri/the-2026-blueprint-moving-missouri-forward.

4. Frank, Avery. "Licensing Compact Exception Is Removed in Missouri," Show-Me Institute, 4 June 2025, www.showmeinstitute.org/blog/regulation/licensing-compact-exception-is-removed-in-missouri.

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