

THIRD READING

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Bill No: SB 1368  
Author: Wahab (D)  
Amended: 4/15/26  
Vote: 21

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SENATE BUS., PROF. & ECON. DEV. COMMITTEE: 10-0, 4/20/26

AYES: Wahab, Choi, Archuleta, Caballero, Grayson, Menjivar, Niello,  
Smallwood-Cuevas, Strickland, Umberg

NO VOTE RECORDED: Arreguín

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 5/14/26

AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

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**SUBJECT:** Speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and hearing aid  
dispensers

**SOURCE:** Author

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**DIGEST:** This bill makes various changes to the regulation of licensed and registered professionals by the Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology and Hearing Aid Dispensers Board (Board) stemming from the joint sunset review oversight of the Board. This bill is the sunset bill for the Board.

**ANALYSIS:**

Existing law establishes the Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists and Hearing Aid Dispensers Licensure Act (Act) for the purposes of regulating speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and hearing aid dispensers. (Business and Professions Code (BPC) §§ 2530 et.seq.)

This bill:

- 1) Provides the Board with statutory authority to establish a retired license category.

- 2) Makes statutory clarifications to enhance Board oversight of continuing education providers and continuing professional development providers.
- 3) Makes technical changes that improve the Board operations and the enforcement of the Act.
- 4) Extends the Board operations to January 1, 2031.

## **Background**

*Oversight Hearings and Sunset Review of Licensing Boards and Programs.* In March 2026, the Senate Business, Professions and Economic Development Committee and the Assembly Committee on Business and Professions (Committees) began their comprehensive sunset review oversight of 10 regulatory entities including the Board. The Committees conducted three oversight hearings. This bill and the accompanying sunset bills are intended to implement legislative changes as recommended by staff of the Committees, and which are reflected in the Background Papers prepared by the Committee staff for each agency and program reviewed this year.

*Background on Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology and Hearing Aid Dispensers Board.* The Board's mandate is to protect the public by licensing and regulating the Speech-Language Pathologist, Audiologists, and Hearing Aid Dispensers, which are three separate professions, each with individual scopes of practice, entry-level requirements, and professional settings. The Board sets entry level licensing standards, examination requirements, ensures consumer protection, and enforces standards of professional conduct by investigating applicant backgrounds, and complaints against licensed and unlicensed practitioners, while taking disciplinary action whenever appropriate.

The Board licenses and regulates more than 44,800 individuals and entities. According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Speech Language Pathologist profession is expected to grow by 15%, the Audiologist profession by 9 percent and the Hearing Aid Dispenser profession by 18% from 2024-2034.

The Board is responsible for regulating the following licensing types and categories:

- Speech-Language Pathologist - provide assessment and therapy for individuals who have speech, language, swallowing, and voice disorders.

- Audiologist - identify hearing, auditory system, and balance disorders, and provide rehabilitative services, including hearing aids and other assistive listening devices.
- Dispensing Audiologist – licensed to perform the duties of an Audiologist as described above and authorized to sell hearing aids.
- Speech-Language Pathology Assistant (SLPA) – registered paraprofessionals who complete formal education and training and serve under the direction of a licensed Speech-Language Pathologist.
- Required Professional Experience Temporary License - speech-language pathology and audiology applicants completing required professional experience to qualify for full licensure, practicing under the supervision of a licensed practitioner.
- Speech-Language Pathology Aide – support personnel approved to work directly under the supervision of a Speech-Language Pathologist. No requirement for formal education and training, but on-the-job training must be provided.
- Audiology Aide - support personnel approved to work under the supervision of a licensed Audiologist. No requirement for formal education and training, but on-the-job training must be provided.
- Speech-Language Pathology or Audiology Temporary License – Speech-Language Pathologist or Audiologist, licensed in another state, who qualifies for a six-month license while seeking permanent licensure.
- Hearing Aid Dispenser – licensed to fit and sell hearing aids, take ear mold impressions, postfitting procedures, and directly observe the ear and test hearing in connection with the fitting and selling hearing aids.
- Hearing Aid Dispenser Temporary License – Hearing Aid Dispenser, licensed in another state, who qualifies for a 12-month temporary license while seeking permanent licensure.

- Hearing Aid Dispenser Trainee License – allows a Hearing Aid Dispenser trainee applicant to work under the supervision of a licensed Hearing Aid Dispenser for up to 18 months.
- Branch License – licenses issued to Hearing Aid Dispensers authorizing the dispenser to work at additional branch locations.

Business and Professions Code Section 2531.02 states that the protection of the public shall be the highest priority for the Board in exercising its licensing, regulatory, and disciplinary functions

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, “The 2026-27 Governor’s Budget provides approximately \$3.16 million (Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology and Hearing Aid Dispensers Fund) and 14.6 positions to support the continued operation of the board’s licensing and enforcement activities. The board anticipates costs to create and implement the retired license category to be minor and absorbable due to the small size of the impacted license population. The Office of Information Services within the Department of Consumer Affairs anticipates absorbable costs of approximately \$16,000 to perform various IT activities.”

**SUPPORT:** (Verified 5/14/26)

California Speech-Language-Hearing Association  
Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology and Hearing Aid Dispensers Board

**OPPOSITION:** (Verified 5/14/26)

None received

**ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT:** The Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology and Hearing Aid Dispensers Board and the California Speech-Language-Hearing Association write in support of continuing the licensing and regulation of the Board.

Prepared by: Anna Billy / B., P. & E.D. /  
5/14/26 22:11:40

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