

Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 1368 (Wahab) – As Amended June 25, 2026

Policy Committee: Business and Professions

Vote: 17 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill extends, until January 1, 2031, the sunset date for the Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology and Hearing Aid Dispensers Board (Board) and makes numerous statutory changes in response to issues raised during the Board’s sunset review oversight process.

Please refer to the Assembly Business and Professions Committee analysis for a detailed enumeration of the provisions of this bill.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Costs of approximately \$3.4 million per year to continue the operation of the Board (Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology and Hearing Aid Dispensers Fund).

The Board also identified increases in revenue as follows: \$7,200 from 96 applications in 2026–27, \$16,650 from 222 applications in 2027–28, and \$30,225 from 403 applications annually thereafter.

The Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Office of Information Services anticipates absorbable costs to perform Americans with Disabilities Act compliance checks; post retired-status paper applications for speech-language pathologists, audiologists, hearing aid dispensers, and dispensing audiologists to the board’s website and to create a new “retired” license status for these license types; develop functionality to allow a licensee to restore a retired license back to active status; and update DCA Search to display the new status.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author, “This bill is necessary to make changes to the [Board] to improve the oversight of the regulated professions under the jurisdiction of the Board.”
- 2) **Background.** *Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology and Hearing Aid Dispensers Board.* The Board’s mandate is to protect the public by licensing and regulating speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and hearing aid dispensers in California. Each of these three distinct professions has its own scope of practice, licensure requirements, and professional settings. In total, the Board licenses and registers nearly 45,000 individuals and entities:

- Speech-language pathologists are licensed to provide assessment and therapy for individuals who have speech, language, swallowing, and voice disorders.
- Speech-language pathology assistants are registered paraprofessionals who complete formal education and training and serve under the direction of a licensed speech-language pathologist.
- Speech-language pathology aides are support personnel approved to work directly under the supervision of a speech-language pathologist and are not required to complete formal education or training, but on-the-job training must be provided.
- Required Professional Experience Temporary Licenses are granted to speech-language pathology and audiology applicants to complete the required professional experience under the supervision of a licensed practitioner.
- Speech-Language Pathology or Audiology Temporary Licenses are granted to speech-language pathologists or audiologists, licensed in another state, who qualify for a six-month license while seeking permanent licensure.
- Audiologists are licensed to identify hearing, auditory system, and balance disorders, and provide rehabilitative services, including hearing aids and other assistive listening devices.
- Dispensing audiologists are licensed to perform the duties of an audiologist as described above and authorized to sell hearing aids.
- Audiology aides are support personnel approved to work under the supervision of a licensed audiologist and are not required to complete formal education or training, but must be provided on-the-job training.
- Hearing aid dispensers are licensed to fit and sell hearing aids, take ear mold impressions, perform postfitting procedures, and directly observe the ear and test hearing in connection with the fitting and selling of hearing aids.
- Hearing Aid Dispenser Temporary Licenses are granted to hearing aid dispensers licensed in another state who qualify for a 12-month temporary license while seeking permanent licensure.
- Hearing Aid Dispenser Trainee Licenses allow hearing aid dispenser trainee applicants to work under the supervision of a licensed hearing aid dispenser for up to 18 months.
- Branch Licenses are issued to hearing aid dispensers, authorizing the dispenser to work at additional branch locations.

Sunset Review. Each year, the Assembly Committee on Business and Professions and the Senate Committee on Business, Professions, and Economic Development hold joint sunset review oversight hearings to review the licensing entities under the DCA. The DCA boards, bureaus, and other entities are responsible for protecting consumers and the public and

regulating the professionals they license. The sunset review process provides an opportunity for the Legislature, DCA, licensing entities, and stakeholders to discuss the entities' performance and make recommendations for improvements. This bill is a "sunset" bill, intended to extend the repeal date of the RCB, as well as incorporate the recommendations from the sunset review oversight hearings.

Issues raised in the sunset review for the Board that are addressed in this bill include: continued regulation by the Board (sunset), retired licenses, continuing education and continuing professional development providers, online sales of hearing aids, and clarifying changes and technical cleanup.

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