

SENATE THIRD READING

SB 1368 (Wahab)

As Amended June 25, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Extends the sunset date for the Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology and Hearing Aid Dispensers Board (SLPAHADB or Board) until January 1, 2031, and makes additional technical changes, statutory improvements, and policy reforms in response to issues raised during the Board's sunset review oversight process.

Major Provisions

- 1) Authorizes master's degrees in communication disorders, communication sciences and disorders, communicative disorders, and speech, language, and hearing sciences from an educational institution approved by the Board to count towards licensure as a Speech-Language Pathologist or Audiologist.
- 2) Clarifies that Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Aides, and Speech-Language Pathology Assistants, cannot be the sole proprietors of, manage, or independently operate a business that engages in the practice of speech-language pathology or audiology.
- 3) Revises acceptable continuing professional development (CPD) providers.
- 4) Prohibits coursework from a master's degree that would qualify an applicant for licensure as a Speech-Language Pathologist from counting towards a Speech-Language Pathology Assistant's CPD requirements.
- 5) Requires the Board, upon an application and payment of a \$75 fee, to issue a retired license to a licensed Speech-Language Pathologist, Speech-Language Pathology Assistant, Audiologist, Hearing Aid Dispenser, or Dispensing Audiologist, as specified.
- 6) Authorizes a Board-approved bachelor's degree in speech, language, and hearing sciences, communication sciences and disorders, or communicative disorders to count towards registration as a Speech-Language Pathology Assistant.
- 7) Clarifies that hearing aids sold online are subject to the same requirements as those sold by catalog or direct mail.
- 8) Establishes a \$100 license fee for a Hearing Aid Dispenser trainee license.
- 9) Codifies CE requirements and license renewal and expiration requirements for Dispensing Audiologists.
- 10) Extends the Board's operations to January 1, 2031.

COMMENTS

The Board's mandate is to protect the public by licensing and regulating speech-language pathology, audiology, and hearing aid dispensing in California, three distinct professions with

individual scopes of practice, licensure requirements, and professional settings. In total, the Board licenses and registers nearly 45,000 individuals and entities, including Speech-Language Pathologists, Speech-Language Pathology Assistants, Speech-Language Pathology Aides, Audiologists, Dispensing Audiologists, Audiology Aides, and Hearing Aid Dispensers. The Board is composed of nine members, including two Speech-Language Pathologists, two Audiologists (one of whom must be a Dispensing Audiologist), two Hearing Aid Dispensers, and three public members. As a Special Fund agency, the Board receives no General Fund support and relies solely on licensing and renewal fees set by statute. At the end of Fiscal Year 2026/27, the Board is projected to have a balance of \$1.68 million, with a 5.4-month budget reserve.

The Board's mission statement, as stated in its 2025-2028 Strategic Plan, is as follows:

To protect the people of California by promoting standards and enforcing the laws and regulations that ensure the qualifications and competence of providers of speech-language pathology, audiology, and hearing aid dispensing services.

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 Department of Consumer Affairs (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 Board and incorporate the recommendations from the sunset review oversight hearings. More information is available in the committee-prepared background paper, available at: <https://abp.assembly.ca.gov/hearings/joint-sunset-review-oversight-hearings>.

According to the Author

"This bill is necessary to make changes to the Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology and Hearing Aid Dispensers Board to improve the oversight of the regulated professions under the jurisdiction of the Board."

Arguments in Support

In support, the *Board* writes:

This bill would ensure that the Board is able to continue its important consumer protection work for the next four years. This bill would clarify and expand the types of acceptable continuing professional development for speech-language pathologists, speech-language pathology assistants, and audiologists for purposes of licensure renewal. This bill would provide new guardrails preventing aides, assistants, and trainees from independently operating businesses, thus enhancing public safety by ensuring only fully licensed professionals provide clinical services. This bill would also provide a clear pathway for experienced professionals to exit or re-enter their practice responsibly with the addition of retired license provisions. Together, these changes promote public protection while aligning the Board's Practice Act with current technology, education, and service-delivery models.

Arguments in Opposition

There is no opposition on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

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.

VOTES**SENATE FLOOR: 33-0-7**

YES: Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Ochoa Bogh, Pérez, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

ABS, ABST OR NV: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Becker, Hurtado, Niello, Padilla, Stern

ASM BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS: 17-0-2

YES: Berman, Johnson, Addis, Ahrens, Alanis, Bauer-Kahan, Chen, Elhawary, Hadwick, Haney, Hart, Irwin, Jackson, Lowenthal, Macedo, Nguyen, Pellerin

ABS, ABST OR NV: Bains, Caloza

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 14-0-1

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Ta

UPDATED

VERSION: June 25, 2026

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