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May 9, 2024

The Honorable Susan R. Donovan, Chair  
House Committee on Health and Human Services  
State House  
82 Smith St.  
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: H 8219 – An Act Relating to Businesses and Professions – Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact**

Dear Chair Donovan:

Please accept this letter regarding H 8219, legislation that would enter Rhode Island into the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact. The act would authorize the compact member states to establish a joint public agency known as the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Compact Commission to administer the provisions of the compact between the states.

Please know the Rhode Island Department of Health's (RIDOH) Center for Professional Boards and Licensing is currently reviewing this proposal at the programmatic level and is seeking input from the associated Board of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology to carefully analyze the impact that joining this compact will have on the ensuring that existing regulatory requirements for licensure in these professions are met and that disciplinary processes are consistent with current statutes, regulations, and Board practices.

RIDOH has long supported licensure compacts as a vehicle to increase accessibility to healthcare services from a larger and more diverse pool of practitioners and streamline the licensure process for appropriately trained and credentialed professionals. Careful consideration must be given, however, to how compacts obligate Rhode Island to accept or investigate disciplinary complaints from other jurisdictions.

Additionally, the committee should be informed that there is a cost to the State for operationalizing compacts. Joining any multistate compact would require a configuration of data-sharing capability between RIDOH's licensing system My License Office (MLO) and compact infrastructure. RIDOH was recently able to finance the implementation of the Nurse Licensure Compact in 2023 through a \$200,000 grant from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing. RIDOH would need additional information on implementation costs and timing before committing to participation in this compact.

We look forward to working with the Committee, our professional board, our State's audiology and speech-language professional organization, and compact administration to learn more about this

compact's requirements and potential benefits to both regulated professionals and patients here in Rhode Island.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposed legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Staci A. Fischer, MD". The signature is written in a cursive style with a loop at the end of the "D".

Staci Fischer, MD  
Acting Director

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services  
The Honorable Arthur Handy  
Nicole McCarty, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House  
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy