**Improve licensure timelines and expand access to audiology and speech language pathology services by contacting your representatives and asking them to take legislative action**

**Background:**

*TAASLP continues to take long term advocacy actions to enable SLPs, Audiologists, and SLPAs to practice most by working with our lobbyists, our State Board, the General Assembly, and other service providers.*

**We need your support to pass HB 496/SB 458**

[**House Bill 496/ Senate Bill 458**](https://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/113/Bill/HB0496.pdf#:~:text=SENATE%20BILL%20458%20By%20Watson%20HOUSE%20BILL%20496,and%20Title%2068%2C%20Chapter%20140%2C%20relative%20to%20health.)This legislation will direct health-related boards to promulgate rules that expedite the application process for occupational licenses by requiring the boards to decide on applications within 60 from the date the board receives the completed application. Moreover, it authorizes health-related boards to request the Department to replace or transfer administrative staff or the attorney assigned to the board by the division of health-related boards. These changes will ensure application processing times in TN are consistent with those of other health licensing boards nationwide and promote a growing audiology and speech-language pathology workforce in the state.

**Action:**

Please **call** or **email** your legislator today to urge them to pass [**House Bill 496/ Senate Bill 458**](https://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/113/Bill/HB0496.pdf#:~:text=SENATE%20BILL%20458%20By%20Watson%20HOUSE%20BILL%20496,and%20Title%2068%2C%20Chapter%20140%2C%20relative%20to%20health.) to protect patients, clients and students in Tennessee by passing the bill to improve licensure timelines.

**You can use the sample scripts below as a guide. Please make sure you also share your personal experiences and stories of why this important legislation is needed.**

**You can locate your legislator’s contact information here:** <http://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/Apps/fmlv3/districts.aspx>

Script:

Dear Senator/Representative/Chairman \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I’m a constituent from (town). I’m contacting you to ask for your support of [House Bill 496/ Senate Bill 458](https://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/113/Bill/HB0496.pdf#:~:text=SENATE%20BILL%20458%20By%20Watson%20HOUSE%20BILL%20496,and%20Title%2068%2C%20Chapter%20140%2C%20relative%20to%20health.), legislation that will expedite the application process for occupational licenses by requiring health-related boards to decide on applications within 60 days of the date the board receives the completed application.

I support the work of the TN Board of Communication Disorders and Sciences (BCDS) and other health-related boards under the Department of Health. The Department's occupational regulation helps ensure the quality provision of audiology and speech- language pathology services. More broadly, state licensure provides consumer protection and recourse against incompetent practitioners or those acting in an unethical manner so that they may be removed from practice.

To ensure the work of BCDS continues to be effective, the agency must be adequately staffed and empowered to process the volume of licensing requests it receives from current and prospective licensees. Unfortunately, over the past few years, the Tennessee Association of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists (TAASLP) has heard from members throughout Tennessee that the Department has struggled to process licensing applications resulting in delays as long as four months, and is often unable to notify applicants in a timely manner if the agency requires additional information to decide on an application.

Ultimately, these delays exacerbate personnel shortages statewide, inhibiting Tennesseans' access to audiology and speech-language pathology services across schools, hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, home health, and early intervention settings.

This legislation will direct health-related boards to promulgate rules that expedite the application process for occupational licenses by requiring the boards to decide on applications within 60 days from the date the board receives the completed application. Moreover, it authorizes health-related boards to request the Department to replace or transfer administrative staff or the attorney assigned to the board by the division of health-related boards. These changes will ensure application processing times in TN are consistent with those of other health licensing boards nationwide and promote a growing audiology and speech-language pathology workforce in the state.

**I respectfully ask that you please consider supporting** [**House Bill 496/ Senate Bill 458**](https://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/113/Bill/HB0496.pdf#:~:text=SENATE%20BILL%20458%20By%20Watson%20HOUSE%20BILL%20496,and%20Title%2068%2C%20Chapter%20140%2C%20relative%20to%20health.)**.**

Sincerely,

Name and credentials, contact information