

Dear Melissa Wiklund and Paul Utke,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the licensure of speech therapy assistants in the state of Minnesota. As a healthcare professional, director of outpatient services and concerned citizen of Minnesota, I firmly believe that establishing licensure for speech therapy assistants is crucial for the well-being and effective treatment of individuals with communication disorders. The ability to communicate is a basis for all learning and education. It is integral to establishing relationship and bonds with others.

Speech therapy assistants play a vital role in assisting licensed speech-language pathologists (SLPs) in providing comprehensive care to individuals with speech, language, and swallowing disorders. They work closely with SLPs to implement treatment plans, conduct therapy sessions, and monitor progress. By working under the supervision of licensed professionals, speech therapy assistants ensure that clients receive consistent and high-quality care.

However, the absence of licensure for speech therapy assistants in Minnesota poses significant challenges. Without clear regulatory standards and oversight, there is a risk of variability in the qualifications and training of individuals working in this role. Licensure would establish minimum education and training requirements, ensuring that speech therapy assistants possess the necessary knowledge and skills to support SLPs effectively.

Furthermore, licensure would enhance accountability and protect the safety of clients. Speech therapy assistants would be held to professional standards of practice, subject to disciplinary action for any violations or misconduct. This regulatory framework would instill confidence in clients and their families, knowing that they are receiving services from competent and qualified professionals.

Moreover, licensure for speech therapy assistants can address workforce shortages and increase access to care, particularly in underserved communities. By formalizing the role of speech therapy assistants and creating clear pathways for education and licensure, we can attract more individuals to this profession and expand the capacity of speech-language pathology

services across the state. There is a nationwide shortage of SLP's that is currently at 23-29%.

In conclusion, I urge you to support the licensure of speech therapy assistants in Minnesota. By doing so, we can uphold the highest standards of care, promote professional development, and ultimately improve the quality of life for individuals with communication disorders. Thank you for considering this important issue, and please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Sincerely,

Suzanne C. Hansen

Director of Outpatient Services

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