

# Legislative Analysis



## CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR HEARING AID DEALERS AND SALESPERSONS

Mitchell Bean, Director  
Phone: (517) 373-8080  
<http://www.house.mi.gov/hfa>

**House Bill 6180 as introduced**  
**Sponsor: Rep. Pam Byrnes**  
**Committee: Regulatory Reform**

### **First Analysis (9-23-08)**

**BRIEF SUMMARY:** The bill would require, as a condition of license renewal, a hearing aid dealer, hearing aid salesperson, and a trainee to complete continuing education courses.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** The bill would increase the administrative costs of the Department of Labor and Economic Growth, Bureau of Commercial Services, by an indeterminate, though not likely significant amount. The bureau would incur costs to approve continuing education courses that may be provided, as well as ensuring annual license renewal applications meet the continuing education requirements

### **THE APPARENT PROBLEM:**

According to a representative of the Michigan Hearing Aid Society, Michigan is one of only seven states that does not require hearing aid dealers, hearing aid salespersons, and trainees to obtain continuing education credits as a condition of licensure. Reportedly, the technology for hearing aides often changes, and some feel licensees could benefit from courses designed to keep their practices in step with the changing technology.

### **THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:**

The bill would require a hearing aid dealer, hearing aid salesperson, and a trainee to complete continuing education courses as a condition for license renewal.

House Bill 6180 would amend the Occupational Code (MCL 339.1305, 339.1307, and 339.1308) to require, as a condition for the renewal of licensure as a hearing aid dealer or hearing aid salesperson, that a licensee complete at least 24 clock hours of continuing education since his or her initial licensure or since the most recent license renewal. In addition, an active trainee licensee would have to have completed at least 12 clock hours of continuing education since the license was issued or since the most recent renewal.

The continuing education courses would have to meet the following requirements:

- Be not less than one clock hour in length.
- Be completed at any time following the expiration of the licensee's previous license and the time the licensee applied for renewal.
- Be designed to maintain and improve the licensee's skill, knowledge, and competency in the practice of selling or fitting a hearing aid.

- Be approved by the Department of Labor and Economic Growth under Section 314. (Section 314 of the Occupational Code (MCL 339.314) states, "[a] board shall recommend to the department the approval or recognition of a program of continuing education which is required by an article, unless it is the board's function to grant the approval or recognition." The Board of Hearing Aid Dealers was abolished by Executive Order 1996-2.)

Further, the act currently requires an applicant for a license as a hearing aid dealer to have served as a licensed hearing aid salesperson for a period of two years under the direction and supervision of a licensed hearing aid dealer. The bill would specify that the applicant must present evidence acceptable to the department that he or she fulfilled that requirement. Lastly, the bill would make numerous revisions of an editorial nature to update and clarify provisions.

### **ARGUMENTS:**

#### ***For:***

Hearing loss can significantly affect a person's life. A properly trained and licensed hearing aid dealer and salesperson are instrumental in taking measurements and matching a consumer with the proper hearing aid. An ill-fitted or ill-matched hearing aide does not benefit anyone. However, when technology changes so fast, it can be difficult for licensees to stay current as to products and safety concerns. Therefore, some believe it would benefit consumers if hearing aid dealers and salespersons, and trainees, were required to attend continuing education courses. Apparently, Michigan is one of only seven states - and the only Great Lakes state - that lacks a continuing education component to licensing requirements. With many boomers expected to be in need of services offered by hearing aid dealers and salespersons in the near future, some feel the bill is essential to ensure that consumers continue to receive a high level of service and expertise.

### **POSITIONS:**

The Michigan Hearing Aid Society supports the bill. (9-23-08)

The Department of Labor and Economic Growth opposes the bill as currently written. (9-23-08)

Legislative Analyst: Susan Stutzky  
Fiscal Analyst: Mark Wolf

---

■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.