

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5812



Introduced by Representatives Angelina "Helen" D.L. Tan, M.D.

AN ACT REGULATING THE PRACTICE OF SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY IN THE PHILIPPINES AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Constitution provides that the State "shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them" (Section 15, Article II, 1987 Philippine Constitution).

Pursuant to this, the State endeavors to build and maintain institutions that educate medical and allied health professionals and subject them to high professional standards while enabling and incentivizing their continuous professional development.

Such is true for various medical and allied health professionals in the country today, except for a select few such as Speech Language Pathology.

Speech Language Pathology is a profession devoted to study and help the children and adults who may have difficulty with communication, speech, and language or swallowing disorder diseases.

It is a branch of rehabilitation involving the study of human communication, its normal development and its disorders. Studies have shown that around one percent (1%) of the estimated 2016 global population or 75 million individuals suffer from stuttering—a physical impairment often linked to neurological and genetic causes, commonly present during the early development years of children. Moreover, Speech Language Pathologists frequently treat individuals who have suffered from stroke, especially when their speech has been impaired.

Unfortunately, this field of allied health remains beyond the reach of most Filipinos. According to the Philippine Association of Speech Pathologists (PASP), there are currently only 400 speech pathologists registered in the country. Presently, there are only four (4) universities that offer Bachelor of Science in Speech Language Pathology (BS SLP) nationwide producing around 100 SLP graduates annually.

This measure recognizes the importance of Speech Language Pathology and its practitioners in maintaining the physical well-being and overall health of citizens. Hence, it aims to advance the allied health profession and guarantee that while Speech Language Pathologists are subjected to high standards, their patients receive world-class treatment and services.

It also seeks to promote the development of the profession of speech pathology and increase the competence of speech pathologists by institutionalizing preventive regulatory measures, programs and activities that will foster their continuing professional growth.

In view of the foregoing, the passage of this measure is earnestly sought.

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Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

ARTICLE I
TITLE AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* - This Act shall be known as the "Speech Language Pathology Act".

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - The State recognizes the important role of speech language pathologists in nation building and promotes the sustained development of a reservoir of speech language pathologists whose competence have been determined by honest and credible licensure examinations whose standards of professional practice and service are world-class and internationally-recognized, globally competitive through preventive regulatory measures, programs, and activities that foster their continuing, professional growth.

SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* - As used in this Act:

a) "Speech Language Pathology" shall mean an allied health profession devoted to the evaluation, diagnosis, management and prevention of human communication disorder.

b) "Speech Language Pathologist" shall mean a person who is registered and licensed to practice speech language pathology and who holds a valid certificate of registration/professional license and professional identification.

c) "Communication Disorder" shall mean impairment in the ability to (1) receive and/or process symbol systems; (2) represents concepts in systems; (3) transmit and use symbol systems. The impairment may be observed in the disorders of hearing, language and/or speech processes.

d) "Evaluation" shall mean the global appraisal of the significance and implications of a diagnostic assessment that shall include formal and informal assessment.

(e) "Diagnosis" shall mean the act of identifying a human communication or swallowing abnormality or disorder by analyzing the symptoms presented. It may also include a study of the origin and development of the symptoms.

(f) "Language" is any socially and culturally accepted, structured, symbolic system for interpersonal communication composed of sounds, letters, manual sign or other symbols arranged in ordered sequences or strings that express thoughts, intentions, experiences and feelings comprised of orthographic, phonological, syntactical, semantic and pragmatic components.

(g) "Speech" shall mean the medium of oral communication that employs a linguistic code (language); through this medium, one can express thoughts and feelings and understand those of others who employ the same code.

ARTICLE II
THE PROFESSIONAL REGULATORY BOARD OF SPEECH PATHOLOGY

SEC. 4. *Creation and Composition of the Board.* - Within ninety days after the effectivity of this Act, there shall be created the Professional Regulatory Board of Speech Language Pathology, hereinafter referred to as the Board under the administrative control and supervision of the Professional Regulation Commission, hereinafter referred to as the Commission, to be composed of a Chairperson and two members who shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines from the

three (3) recommendees for each vacant position chosen from the five nominees of the integrated and accredited national organization of speech language pathologist.

SEC. 5. Qualifications of the Members of the Board. - To be the Chairperson or a member of the Board, one must at the time of higher appointment be:

a) A natural born citizen of the Philippines and an actual resident thereof for at least five (5) years before his/her appointment;

b) A duly registered and licensed allied health professional holding a valid certificate of registration/professional license and professional identification card, in active practice for the past five (5) years and a member in good standing of the accredited integrated national organization of speech language pathologists prior to his/her appointment, except if appointed the first Chairperson/member;

c) Of good moral character and must not have been convicted of any offense involving moral turpitude; and

d) Must not have pecuniary interest, directly or indirectly, in any school, academy, college, university or institution conferring an academic degree necessary for administration to the practice of speech language pathology or where review classes in preparation for the licensure examination are being offered or conducted, nor shall he/she be a member of the faculty or of the administration thereof at the time of his/her appointment to the Board.

SEC. 6. Powers and Functions of the Board. - The Board shall have the authority to:

a) Promulgate, administer and enforce rules and regulations necessary for carrying out the provisions of this Act;

b) Administer oaths in connection with the administration of this Act;

c) Supervise and regulate the registration, licensure and practice of speech language pathology in the Philippines;

d) Adopt an official seal of the Board;

e) Maintain a roster of speech language pathologists indicating therein the basic information about the registered professionals;

f) Study the conditions affecting the practice of speech language pathology in the Philippines and adopt measures for the enhancement of the professional ethical and technical standards therein;

g) Ensure, in coordination with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), that all educational institutions offering speech language pathology education comply with the policies, standards and requirements of the course prescribed by the CHED in the areas of curriculum, faculty, library and facilities;

h) Prescribe and/or adopt a Code of Ethics and Code of Technical Standards for the practice of speech language pathology;

i) Standards for the practice of speech language pathology; Issue, reinstate, suspend, revoke certificate of registration and/or professional license or cancel special permits for the practice of speech language pathology;

j) Prescribe guidelines and criteria in the Continuing Professional Education (CPE) program for speech language pathologist;

k) In consultation with the duly accredited organization of speech language pathologist and the duly recognized association of schools conferring a Bachelor's or other entry level degree in Speech Language Pathology, prescribe the area of competence to be included in the computerized licensure examination and their relative weights, determined the syllabi of the subjects, construct the test questions in licensure examination, score and rate examination papers;

l) Hear or investigate any violations of this Act, its implementing rules and regulations and the Code of Ethics for speech language pathologists, and for this purpose, to issue subpoena *duces*

tecum and/or *ad testificandum* to secure the appearance of the witnesses and the production of documents in connection therewith; Provided, that the decision of the Board shall, unless appealed to the Commission, become final and executory after fifteen (15) days from receipt of the judgment or decision;

m) Adopt a program for the full computerization of the licensure examination;

n) Grant registration without examination subject to the approval by the Commission;

o) Issue and/or cancel special permits to persons admitted to the practice of speech language pathology for a specific duration of time, and certificates of recognition for advanced studies, researches and accomplishments that contribute to the enrichment of the profession; and

p) Perform such other powers and functions as it may deem necessary to carry out the objectives of this Act.

The policies, resolutions, rules and regulations issued or promulgated by the Board shall be subject to the review and approval of the Commission.

SEC. 7. Term of Office. - The Chairperson and members of the Board shall hold office for three (3) years after appointment or until their successors shall have been appointed and duly qualified; Provided, that members of the first Board to be appointed after the approval of this Act shall hold office for the following terms:

Chairperson for three (3) years, one member for two (2) years, and the other member for one (1) years: Provided, further, that the Chairperson or any member may be reappointed for another term of three (3) years but in no case shall he/she serve continuously for more than six (6) years. Vacancy in the Board shall be filled for the unexpired term only. Each member of the Board shall automatically be registered as speech language pathologists and issued certificate of registration/professional license and professional identification card and shall take the proper oath of office prior to assumption.

SEC. 8. Compensation of the Members of the Professional Regulatory Boards. - The chairperson and members of the Board shall receive compensation and allowances comparable to that being received by the Chairpersons and members of existing regulatory boards under the Commission as provided for in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 9. Suspension and/or Removal of Board Members. - Any member of the Board may be suspended or removed from office for gross neglect of duty, incompetence, malpractice, unprofessionalism, immorality, unethical or dishonorable conduct, final judgment of crimes involving moral turpitude, and manipulation or rigging of the licensure examination results, disclosure of secret and confidential information in the examination questions prior to the conduct of the said examination or tampering of grades.

The administrative proceedings shall be heard by the Commission, whose recommendation shall be submitted to the Office of the President. During the investigation, the respondent shall be placed under preventive suspension by the Commission and another designated to fill the temporary vacancy in the Board.

SEC. 10. Supervision of the Board, Custodian of its Records, Secretariat and Support Services. - The Board shall be under the administrative supervision of the Commission. All records of the Board, including applications for examination, and administrative and other investigative cases conducted by the Board shall be under the custody of the Commission.

The Commission shall designate the secretary of the Board and shall provide the secretariat and other support services to implement the provision of this Act.

SEC. 11. Annual Report. - The Board shall submit an annual report to the Commission after the close of each calendar year, giving a detailed account of the proceedings of the Board during the year and recommending measures to be adopted, with the end in view of upgrading and improving the conditions affecting the practice of speech language pathology in the Philippines.

ARTICLE III LICENSURE EXAMINATION AND REGISTRATION

SEC. 12. *Examination Required.* - All applicants for registration for the practice of speech language pathology shall be required to undergo a licensure examination to be given by the Board in such places and dates as the Commission may designate subject to compliance with the requirements prescribed by the Commission.

SEC. 13. *Qualification for Examination.* - In order to be allowed to take part in the licensure examination, an applicant must, at the time of filing of higher application, establish to the satisfaction of the Board that he/she has met the following qualifications:

a) A Filipino citizen or a foreign citizen whose state/country has reciprocity agreement with the Philippines in the practice of speech language pathology;

b) Good moral character;

c) Has not been convicted of a crime involving moral turpitude; and

e) A graduate of a Bachelor's degree in speech language pathology from a duly recognized school, college or university in the Philippines or abroad and recognized/accredited by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED).

SEC. 14. *Scope of Examination.* - The subjects in the licensure examination for Speech Language Pathologists shall cover the following:

a) Anatomy and physiology of the speech and hearing mechanism

b) Neurological bases of speech and hearing disorders

c) Articulation and phonological disorders

d) Hearing impairment and aural habilitation

e) Language and cognitive communication disorders

f) Fluency disorders

g) Voice disorders

h) Cleft lip and palate and craniofacial conditions

i) Dysphagia

j) Medical and neurological disorders that may cause communication and swallowing disorders

k) Normal development and function of speech, language, hearing and swallowing

l) Principles of assessment and intervention for speech, language, hearing and/or swallowing conditions

m) Research, Professional Ethics and Community Development The Board may recluster, rearrange, modify, add or exclude any subject or change the percentage or weight given to said subjects, as the need arises so as to conform to technological changes.

SEC. 15. *Registration Without Examination as Speech Language Pathologist.* - A person who possesses the pertinent qualifications required for admission in the examination for registration as a speech language pathologist pursuant to the provisions of this Act may be registered without examination, Provided, That the applicant files with the Board within six (6) months after the effectivity of the Implementing Rules and Regulations, an application for registration and issuance of a certificate of registration/professional license and professional identification card by submitting credentials showing that the applicant before the effectivity of this Act is a bachelor's degree holder of speech language pathology from a college or university accredited by the CHED. Provided, further, that the applicant is a member of the Accredited Integrated Professional Organization of speech language pathologists.

SEC. 16. *Ratings in the Examination.* - To be qualified as having passed the licensure examination for speech language pathologists, a candidate must have obtained a weighted general average of seventy-five (75%), with no grade lower than fifty (50%) in any given subject. A candidate who obtained grade/s below fifty percent (50%) must take the examination in the subject or subjects where he/she obtained a grade below fifty percent (50%) within two (2) years from the date of his/her last examination. The topic or subjects retaken must have each a rating of no less than seventy-five percent (75%) in order to qualify as having passed the examination.

SEC. 17. *Report Ratings.* - The Board shall submit to the Commission the ratings obtained by each candidate within ten (10) calendar days after the examination unless extended for just cause.

SEC. 18. *Oath of Speech Language Pathologist.* - All successful examinees qualified for registration and all qualified applicants for registration without examination shall be required to take an oath of profession before any member of the Board or any authorized officer of the Commission to administer oaths, prior to entering into the practice of speech language pathology in the Philippines.

SEC. 19. *Issuance of Certificate of Registration/Professional License and Professional Identification Card.* - A certificate of registration/professional license and professional identification card shall be issued to all successful examinees and registrants either with or without examination upon compliance with all the legal requirements including payment of fees prescribed by the Commission. The certificate of registration/professional license shall bear the signature of the Chairperson of the Commission and the Chairperson and members of the Board, indicating that the person named therein is entitled to the practice of the profession with all the privileges appurtenant thereto. The said certificate shall remain in full force and effect until withdrawn, suspended or revoked in accordance with this Act.

A professional identification card bearing the registration number, date of issuance, expiry date, duly signed by the chairperson of the Commission, shall likewise be issued to every registrant who has paid the prescribed fee.

SEC. 20. *Indication of Certificate of Registration/Professional Tax Receipt.* - The speech language pathologist shall be required to indicate his/her certificate of registration/professional license number and date of issuance, including the professional tax receipt number on the documents he/she signs, uses or issues in connection with the practice of his/her profession.

SEC. 21. *Refusal to Register.* - The Board shall refuse to register and shall not issue a certificate of registration/professional license and professional identification card to any person convicted by a court of competent jurisdiction or a criminal offense involving moral turpitude or guilty of immoral or dishonorable conduct or to any person of unsound mind. In the event of refusal to issue the certificate for any reason, the Board shall give the applicant a written statement setting forth the reason for such action, which statement shall be incorporated in the record of the Board.

SEC. 22. *Revocation or Suspension of the Certificate of Registration/Professional License and Professional Identification Card and Cancellation of Special Permit.* - The Board may, after giving proper notice of hearing to the party concerned, revoke the practitioner's certificate of registration/professional license or suspend him/her from the practice of his/her profession or cancel his/her permit for any of the causes or grounds mentioned in Section 21 of this Act or for any unprofessional or unethical conduct, malpractice, violation of any of the provisions of this Act, its rules and regulations, the Code of Ethics and the Standards for speech language pathologists.

SEC. 23. *Reinstatement, Re-issuance or Replacement of Certificate of Registration/Professional License.* - A person may apply to the Board for reinstatement of a certificate of registration/professional license at any time after two (2) years from the date of revocation of said certificate. The application shall be in writing and shall conform with the requirements as provided by the Board. No certificate/license shall be reinstated unless the Board is satisfied that a good cause exists to warrant such reinstatement.

SEC. 24. *Roster of Speech Language Pathologist.* - The Board shall prepare, update and maintain a roster of speech language pathologist in coordination with the integrated and accredited professional organization, which shall contain the name of each registration and issuance of certificates, and other data which the Board may deem pertinent. The roster shall be open to the public, copies of which shall be mailed to each person listed therein.

SEC. 25. *Issuance of Special/Temporary Permit.* - Special/Temporary permit may be issued by the Board subject to the approval by the Commission and payment of the fees the latter has prescribed and charged thereof to the following persons:

a) a foreign speech language pathologist called for consultation for a specific purpose which, in the judgment of the Board, is essential for the growth of the profession: Provided, however, that his/her activities shall be limited only to the particular work, for which he/she is being engaged; Provided, further, that he/she is qualified to practice his/her profession in his/her state or country. Provided, finally, that there is no Filipino speech language pathologist qualified for such consultation or specific purpose;

b) a foreign speech language pathologist who is an internationally recognized expert or specialist in any branch of speech language pathology and his/her service is essential for the advancement of speech language pathology in the Philippines; and

c) a foreign speech language pathologist to be engaged as professor, lecturer, or critic in fields essential to speech language pathology education in the Philippines is confined to teaching only.

The permit shall, among other things, include these limitations and conditions: the same shall be valid for a period of not more than one (1) year subject to renewal; the branch or specialty of speech language pathology which permit holder can practice in; and the specific place of practice such as clinic, hospital, center, school/college/university offering the course of speech language pathology. The Board, subject to the approval by the Commission, shall prescribe rules and regulations for the implementation of this particular section.

ARTICLE IV PRACTICE OF SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY

SEC. 26. *Scope of the Practice of Speech Language Pathology.* - The scope of the practice of Speech Language Pathology shall embrace, but shall not be limited to the performance, in collaboration with other professionals, families and the community of any of the following:

a) Screen, identify, assess, diagnose, manage and prevent disorders of speech such as, but not limited to articulation, fluency, voice, hearing and language;

b) Screen, identify, assess, diagnose, manage and prevent disorders of oralpharyngeal functions such as, but not limited to dysphagia and related disorders;

c) Screen, identify, assess, diagnose and manage cognitive communication systems and provide training in their use;

d) Assess, select and develop augmentative and alternative communication systems and provide training in their use;

e) Screen hearing acuity for the purpose of speech language evaluation and aural rehabilitation;

f) Plan, teach and carry out home programs and training for patients and their families;

g) Plan, conduct and evaluate teaching-learning activities for students of speech language pathology and other related courses; for other health professionals, patients and their families;

h) Plan, conduct and evaluate researches in pursuit of new knowledge for the growth of speech language pathology in the Philippines;

i) Provide consultancy to government and non-government organization regarding the field of speech language pathology;

j) Perform administrative duties in speech language pathology clinics/units in hospitals, schools and other rehabilitation centers; and

k) Teaching, lecturing and reviewing subjects given in the licensure examination.

SEC. 27. *Prohibition on the Practice of Speech Language Pathology.* - No person shall practice or offer to practice speech language pathology in the Philippines or offer himself/herself as

speech language pathologist, or use the title, word, letter figure, or a sign tending to convey the impression that he/she is a speech language pathologist, or advertise or indicate in any manner whatsoever that he/she is qualified to perform the work of a speech language pathologist unless he/she has satisfactorily passed the licensure examination given by the Board, except as otherwise provided in this Act, and is a holder of a valid certificate of registration/professional license and professional identification card or a valid temporary/special permit duly issued to him/her by the Board and the Commission.

SEC. 28. *Prohibited Acts.* - No person shall:

a) Engage in the practice of speech language pathology by representing himself/herself as a speech language pathologist without a valid certificate of registration/professional license or a valid temporary/special permit granted by the Board pursuant to this Act;

b) Practice his/her profession during the period of his/her suspension from the practice thereof;

c) Allow an unqualified person to advertise or to practice the profession by using his/her certificate of registration/professional license or temporary/special permit; and

d) Use as his/her own the certificate of registration/professional license or temporary/special permit of another.

SEC. 29. *Code of Ethics and Code of Technical Standards for Speech Language Pathologist.* - The Board shall adopt and promulgate the Code of Ethics and Code of Technical Standards for speech language pathologist prescribed and issued by the Accredited and Integrated Professional Organization (AIPO) of speech language pathologists.

SEC. 30. *Continuing Professional Development (CPD).* - All speech language pathologists shall abide by the requirements, rules, and regulation on continuing professional education to be promulgated by the PRC Regulatory Board, subject to the approval of the Commission, in coordination with the AIPO for speech language pathology and the representative of duly accredited education institutions. For this purpose, the Board may create a CPD Council to implement the CPD program subject to the guidelines as may be issued by the Commission.

SEC. 31. *Integration of Speech Language Pathologist.* - The speech language pathology profession shall be integrated into one (1) national professional organization of speech language pathologists, which shall be duly registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). The Board, subject to approval by the Commission, shall accredit the said organization as the one and only Accredited and Integrated Professional Organization (AIPO) of registered speech language pathologists. All speech language pathologists whose names appear in the Registry Book of Speech Language Pathologists shall ipso facto or automatically become members thereof and shall receive all the benefits and privileges appurtenant thereto upon payment of AIPO membership fees and dues.

Membership in the Accredited Integrated Professional Organization (AIPO) shall not be a bar to membership in other organizations of speech language pathologists.

SEC. 32. *Foreign Reciprocity.* - No foreign speech language pathologist shall be given a certificate of registration/professional license and professional identification card or be entitled to any of the privileges under this Act unless the country of which the foreign speech language pathologist is a subject or citizen specifically permits Filipino speech language pathologists to practice within its territorial limits on the same basis as the subjects or citizens of said country or state.

ARTICLE V FINAL PROVISIONS

SEC. 33. *Funding Provision.* - The Chairman of the Professional Regulation Commission shall immediately include in the Commission's programs the implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Acts and thereafter.

SEC. 34. *Penal Provision.* - Any person who shall violate any of the provisions of this Act or any of its implementing rules and regulations as promulgated by the Board subject to the approval of the Commission shall upon conviction, be punished by a fine of not less than Twenty Thousand Pesos (P20,000.00) nor more than Fifty Thousand Pesos (P50,000.00) or by imprisonment of not less than two (2) years nor more than five (5) years, or both, at the discretion of the court.

SEC. 35. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - To implement the provisions of this Act, the Board, shall, subject to the approval of the Commission, promulgate the rules and regulations and the Code of Ethics for speech language pathologists within sixty (60) days after the constitution of the first Board.

SEC. 36. *Separability Clause.* - If any section or provision of this Act shall be declared invalid or unconstitutional, such shall not invalidate any other section or provision of this Act.

SEC. 37. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, decrees, orders, issuances or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 38. *Effectivity Clause.* - This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) major newspaper of national circulation whichever comes earlier.

Approved,