



## Overview of Assembly Bill 155 of the 81st (2021) Session of the Nevada Legislature

Nevada Speech Language-Pathology, Audiology  
and Hearing Aid Dispensing Board  
**Assemblywoman Michelle Gorelow, Sponsor**

**NRS 637B.175 prescribes the maximum fees the Board may charge for licensing and other services. Assembly Bill 155 revises the fee caps in NRS 637B.175.** The Board recognizes this is not the ideal time to raise fee caps and fees, yet the Board's current reserve situation demands it, especially as the process is lengthy and relies on our biennial legislature.

### WHY A FEE CAP INCREASE?

<b>Room to Increase Actual Fees Charged</b>	Actual fees charged currently are at the maximum fee cap (except for one). The last change to the Board's fee caps occurred upon the merger of the formerly separate Audiologists and Speech Pathologists Board and Hearing Aid Specialists Board in 2015.
<b>Replenish Board Reserves</b>	Every year from FY16 to FY19, the Board's operating expenses were in excess of revenue, draining over \$70,000 in reserves. FY21 expenses are projected to exceed revenue by approximately \$28,000. The Board is unable to remain solvent and rebuild reserves without a modest increase.
<b>Licensee Growth</b>	Our Board has seen a 7% average annual increase in licensees since FY16, resulting in increased in licensing and oversight work. We remain very responsive and efficient, despite employing only two part-time staff, and are committed to maintaining this level of quality customer service.
<b>Protection of the Public</b>	Since FY16 the Board has worked 21 complaint cases, of which only six (6) have resulted in an order allowing the Board to recoup legal costs. Since FY16 we have incurred almost \$33,000 in legal fees, recovering just over \$7,000.
<b>Investments in Technology &amp; Efficiency</b>	The Board has made several investments since FY18 in a licensing database that is integrated with our website to improve licensee access to applications and renewals and provides a more user-friendly backend that allows Board staff to manage content.

### COST-SAVING EFFORTS

Our Board is **funded solely by licensing fees** has instituted a number of cost-saving measures to ensure funds are used as effectively as possible:

- **Part Time/ Shared Staff:** The Board employs three (3) part-time staff: An Executive Director at .7 FTE, a Licensing Coordinator at .5 FTE (shared with the OT Board), and an Investigator used on an as-needed, hourly basis. Staff have foregone salary increases in FY21.
- **Shared Office Space:** The Board shares office space with the Occupational Therapy and Environmental Health Specialists Boards, and our FY21 cost-sharing agreement has been revised to relinquish unneeded office space and lower operating costs.
- **Online Applications:** Licensees may submit new applications, renew, and make payments through our website, reducing application processing time and dependence on paper and storage.
- **Self-Managed Website:** A 2020 website upgrade has reaped significant cost-savings and allows Board to directly manage most website content, reducing the need for IT support.

- **Cloud-Based Operations:** Board email and storage has moved to Office 365, which has been especially useful for remote work during COVID-19, eliminating interruptions in efficiency.
- **Paperless Practices:** Board staff are adopting processes that rely less on paper by creating and storing records electronically to save paper/printing resources and minimize storage fees.
- **Licensee Education:** It is hoped that fewer complaints will be received, resulting in lower legal costs, through efforts to support license management and improve licensee knowledge of our practice laws and regulations.

## LICENSEE IMPACT

An analysis of median salary data provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor (BOL) statistics and the results of our 2020 Licensee Survey tell us that approximately 78% of our licensees earn \$60,000 or more annually:

	Speech-Language Pathologist	Audiologist	Hearing Aid Specialist
<b>BOL Median Pay (2019)</b>	<b>\$79,120</b> annually <sup>1</sup> (\$38.04/hour)	<b>\$77,600</b> annually <sup>2</sup> (\$37.31/hour)	<b>\$53,420</b> <sup>3</sup> (\$25.68/hour)
<b>Survey Self-Report</b>	<b>62%</b> (233 of 373 respondents)	<b>78%</b> (14 of 18 respondents)	<b>93%</b> (29 of 31 respondents)

Current new application and renewal fees cost less than one-half of one percent of a \$60,000 annual salary. A \$25 increase in actual fees charged would keep these fees at or below one-half of one percent of \$60,000.

## COMPARISON TO OTHER NEVADA BOARDS

We compared our licensee census, licensee salaries, and licensing fees against 17 other Nevada Boards that are similar in size and/or professional area to our Board<sup>4</sup>.

Our Board is **larger (# of licensees) than one-half** of comparison Boards.

Our practitioners' **median professional salaries are the 6<sup>th</sup> highest** of all 18 Boards.

Both our **fee caps and actual fees charged are less than 50%** of comparison Boards.

Eight (8) of the comparison Boards **changed their NRS fee caps** in the last two legislative sessions: two (2) in 2017, and six (6) in 2019.

## TIMELINE

Following passage of this bill, we would pursue a modest increase to ACTUAL FEES CHARGED through a change to regulation in NAC 637B. Licensees would not likely be impacted until sometime in **2022**.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/speech-language-pathologists.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2018/may/oes291181.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes292092.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Alcohol, Drug, & Gambling; Athletic Trainers; Barbers and Barbering; Chiropractic; Dispensing Opticians; Funeral; Landscape Architecture; Marriage & Family Therapist; Massage Therapists; Nursing; Occupational Therapists; Optometry; Oriental Medicine; Physical Therapists; Podiatry; Psychological Examiners; Social Workers