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Hello, and thank you for your time today. My name is Lars Ebsworth. I have been a resident of Malden, Massachusetts since April of 2023. I moved here to attend Emerson College for graduate school to become a Speech-Language Pathologist. I will graduate in August of 2025. While my program ends in 10 months, I don't want my time in the state of MA to end. I want to plant roots and start a life here. With the current state of the provisional licensure bill, the ability for me to pursue full licensure in SLP in Massachusetts is jeopardized.

It is a national requirement that I complete a clinical fellowship following my masters degree in order to obtain full licensure in speech-language pathology. The fellowship is typically a 36 week-long paid position. Massachusetts is the only state left in the US whose licensing board for Speech-Language Pathology currently does not offer a provisional license. Without a provisional license, I cannot be reimbursed through insurance companies for my services.

Thus, nearly every employer in the state cannot hire me for my fellowship year because they have no way of paying me.

I am a second career student; I was an actor pre-pandemic that decided to pursue a career in allied health after the COVID pandemic. When deciding which school I should choose for my graduate degree, I was lucky enough to choose between Northwestern University and Emerson College, two of the top programs in the country for my field. I chose Emerson due to their proximity to the prestigious hospital networks located in Boston. To move towards my goal of working in a hospital setting post-graduation, I am currently pursuing an internship through my institution at Mass Eye & Ear. I am eager to further my clinical experiences in a setting like a Harvard teaching hospital. Unfortunately, all of the networking opportunities created through this internship could not logistically lead to me being offered my first job in Massachusetts without this bill being passed.

Passing this bill would promote students to stay in the state upon graduation to practice this profession. Considering that the American Speech-Language Hearing Association projects a 25% increase in available SLP jobs nationwide by the year 2029 - approximately 40,500 new jobs - the Commonwealth needs to promote retention of new grads to prevent a provider shortage for its residents. Luckily, promoting retention is as easy as finalizing this bill.

In short, I strongly support implementing this bill, and I hope you will too. Thank you.