I am writing to express my opposition to the bill pertaining to the Area Education Agencies. I am an audiologist and owner of Hearing Associates, P.C. in Mason City, Iowa. I have been a practicing audiologist for almost 42 years, most of them in Iowa. My initial job in Iowa was at AEA 2 in Clear Lake in 1982. While working at AEA 2, I had the good fortune of attending a number of national meetings. Upon discovering I worked as an educational audiologist in Iowa, I was amazed at the high regard the AEA system had nationally. In the late 1990’s, I attended numerous national meetings as president-elect, president and past president of the Iowa Speech Language and Hearing Association. Again the AEA structure and the provision of special education services in Iowa were repeatedly recognized as the “best in the country!” I recently finished a 16 year appointment as co-chair of the American Speech Language Hearing Association’s Health Care Economics Committee. In that role, I gave numerous presentations and attended numerous meetings outside of my profession. Again I was overwhelmed with the high regard Iowa’s AEA structure and the provision of special education services were held.

As a private practice audiologist, I have worked with hundreds of families whose children were served by the AEA. Many of these families are in small rural districts that, if it weren’t for the AEA, would not have been able to provide the necessary services to these families. In the 41 years of living in Iowa, I do not recall anyone complaining about the services provided in the schools.

I see a number of issues moving forward with the current legislation! First it appears as though the stakeholders related to special education have not been consulted. Nor has the problem with the AEA ever been defined. It seems this is a solution for a problem Iowa does not have. Secondly, in the many states where services are contracted, children do not receive the necessary services and many are lost. Currently there is a dire shortage of audiologists in Iowa. This is particularly a problem in the private sector. This feels short sighted when study after study shows that hearing impaired students with adequate services frequently do not need special education services as they enter the K-12 programming.

If there is a need to move legislation forward, I would hope that it would be to establish a workgroup to identify what problems exist and then look at possible solutions to those problems.

Thank you,

Stuart Trembath, M.A,, CCC-A

Owner of Hearing Associates, P. C