



Via email: HouseStateGovernmentandElections@rilegislature.gov

March 6, 2024

The Honorable Evan Shanley
Chair, House State Government and Elections Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H 7388: Right to Earn a Living Act

Dear Representative Shanley:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), I write to express opposition to the Right to Earn a Living Act (H 7388), which would 1) require state agencies to conduct a comprehensive review of all entry regulations; 2) allow any person to petition to modify or repeal entry regulations; and 3) be awarded attorney and associated fees if their claim is upheld in the courts.

ASHA is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 228,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology assistants; and students. Over 800 ASHA members reside in Rhode Island.¹

ASHA is opposed to H 7388 because it requires necessary health, safety, and welfare licensing boards to go through the lengthy and onerous process of justifying the need for licensure for consumer protection. It also requires licensing boards to allow individuals to petition to have the licensure laws repealed or modified – and seek attorney fees and other compensation from the state's already stretched budget if they win.

Regulatory oversight, legislated through occupational licensure, is the accepted practice for consumer protection. The professions of audiology and speech-language pathology are regulated through licensure in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The public relies on the expertise of licensure boards and advisory committees and their staff to ensure that those in practice are held to a minimum standard for the profession. Modifications to licensure require a thorough review by the board and should only be conducted when accepted national standards are modified. Conducting a review of the licensure standards for the purpose of eliminating licensure is unnecessary and costly.

Licensure and ASHA Certification

Both licensure and ASHA certification help ensure the quality provision of audiology and speech-language pathology services. State licensure provides consumer protection and recourse against incompetent practitioners or those acting in an unethical manner so that they may be removed from practice. ASHA's Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) is the highest standard and most widely recognized symbol of competency for audiologists (CCC-A) and speech-language pathologists (CCC-SLP). To maintain their CCC, audiologists and SLPs must accumulate 30 professional development hours every three years. Individuals holding the CCC are expected to abide by ASHA's Code of Ethics. While certification is important for internal

professional recognition and external accountability, licensure is important to legally work and provides minimum standards of competency that protect the public from harm.

Thank you for your consideration of ASHA's position on H 7388. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Susan Adams, ASHA's director of state legislative and regulatory affairs, at sadams@asha.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tena L. McNamara". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tena L. McNamara, AuD, CCC-A/SLP
2024 ASHA President

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2023). Rhode Island [Quick Facts]. <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/advocacy/state-fliers/rhode-island-state-flyer.pdf>.