



1925-2025
Legacy. Impact. Possibilities.

June 20, 2025

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Thune and Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), I urge you to include Section 44304 of H.R. 1, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, in any Senate budget reconciliation legislation. Specifically, we ask the Senate to include language that would provide an annual inflationary update to Medicare provider payments based on the Medicare Economic Index (MEI).

ASHA is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 241,000 members, certificate holders, and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists (SLPs); speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology assistants; and students. Medicare Part B payment cuts on multiple fronts continue to hinder audiologists and SLPs in ensuring adequate access to care for Medicare beneficiaries, especially those in rural and lower income areas.

The gap between Medicare payments for audiology and speech-language pathology services and rising practice costs will continue to widen in the absence of an annual inflationary update to payments determined by the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule, which sets Medicare reimbursement rates for both physician and nonphysician clinicians. Without a built-in mechanism like MEI to annually adjust for inflation, Medicare payments will continue to erode providers' financial stability and jeopardize patient access to medically necessary services. This disparity is exacerbated by the annual 2% payment reduction resulting from sequestration and could be further worsened with an additional 4% cut if Congress fails to waive PAYGO requirements.

Medicare payments' failure to keep pace with the cost of doing business for health care providers is already hurting access to care. According to a 2024 ASHA member survey, 24% of audiologists and SLPs reported reduced clinical staff positions, while 15% reported restricting their number of Medicare patients.¹

The inclusion of an MEI-based update would mark a vital step toward ensuring long-term sustainability and predictability in Medicare payments. This common-sense reform is broadly supported by health care provider organizations and is included in section 44304 of H.R. 1. We urge the Senate to include this critical provision in any budget reconciliation legislation to preserve access to care for millions of Americans.

If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Josh Krantz, ASHA's director of federal affairs for health care, at jkrantz@asha.org.

Sincerely,



A. B. Mayfield-Clarke, PhD, CCC-SLP
2025 ASHA President

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (April 2023). *ASHA Member Survey, Insurance Reimbursement Reductions*.