



September 13, 2024

The Honorable John DiSanto, Chair
The Honorable Sharif Street, Vice Chair
Senate Banking & Insurance Committee
Senate Box 203015
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3015

RE: HB 2268

Dear Senators DiSanto and Street:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), I write to express support for HB 2268, which would require insurance plans to include coverage for habilitative and rehabilitative speech therapy treatment for childhood stuttering.

ASHA is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 234,000 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. Over 9,000 ASHA members reside in Pennsylvania.¹

We strongly agree with the provisions this bill puts in place to ensure that stuttering therapy services are accessible through appropriate insurance coverage. We also urge the Committee to ensure that the provisions of HB 2268 protect constituents from utilization management practices that may pose barriers to timely access to stuttering therapy services.

Stuttering is an interruption in the flow of speaking characterized by specific disfluencies. Stuttering also includes negative reactions to speaking, avoidance behaviors, secondary mannerisms, and physical tension. People who stutter may also experience psychological, emotional, social, and functional reactions to stuttering (anxiety, embarrassment, avoidance, tension and struggle, low self-esteem). As a result, they may speak less and avoid social situations.²

SLPs play a central role in assessing and treating fluency disorders, including stuttering. It is important to note that stuttering is not limited to disfluencies and intervention does not focus solely on increasing fluency. SLPs are trained to address disfluencies as well as the negative reactions to speaking, avoidance of speaking, and secondary mannerisms with a goal of reducing disfluencies and increasing comfort and confidence in speaking. SLP-provided stuttering treatment to children results in sustained and lasting improvements in communication, reduces the negative impacts of stuttering, and increases quality of life.³

ASHA urges you to support this legislation to ensure your constituents have access to medically necessary speech therapy services provided by SLPs. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Doanne Ward-Williams, ASHA's senior director of state affairs, at dwardwilliams@asha.org.

Sincerely,



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

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2023). *Pennsylvania* [Quick Facts].

<https://www.asha.org/siteassets/advocacy/state-fliers/pennsylvania-state-flyer.pdf>

² American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). *Fluency Disorders* [Practice Portal].

<https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/clinical-topics/fluency-disorders/>

³ Chaudhary, C., John, S., Kumaran D, S., Guddattu, V., & Krishnan, G. (2022). Technological interventions in stuttering: A systematic review. *Technology and Disability*, 34(4), 201-222.

<https://content.iospress.com/doi/10.3233/TAD-220379>