

April 29, 2025

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, MD
Chair, Health, Education, Labor, and
Pensions Committee
United States Senate
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member, Health, Education, Labor,
and Pensions Committee
United States Senate
648 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tim Walberg
Chairman, Committee on Education and
Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert “Bobby” Scott
Ranking Member, Committee on Education
and Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, Chair Walberg, and Ranking Member Scott:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), I am writing to share our strong support for maintaining the vital role of the U.S. Department of Education (ED) in advancing student success. We are deeply concerned about the recent executive order titled “Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities,” along with other administration actions that may undermine ED’s ability to carry out its critical mission.

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. Nearly 47% of ASHA members work in early childhood and K-12 educational settings, including 5.3% who work in preschool settings.¹ These professionals play a central role in supporting students, families, and school staff in early intervention, early childhood, and both general and special education K-12 settings. The services provided by ASHA members are essential to helping children and students develop effective cognitive-communication skills and achieve positive learning outcomes.

ASHA strongly supports the continued existence of an independent, cabinet-level Department of Education. We oppose this executive order and related actions—such as staffing reductions and the cancellation of grants and contracts—that may hurt student achievement and hinder access to critical services provided by ASHA’s school-based members. ED plays a fundamental role in enforcing legal protections for students, particularly those with disabilities, and in supporting educators by elevating best practices. It complements the efforts of state and local education agencies to ensure a quality education and related support for all students and their families.

Speech-language pathology services are particularly vital and highly utilized by students served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). According to ED’s *45th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2023*, speech or language impairments account for the second-largest percentage (34%) of primary eligibility disabilities in children ages 3-5 receiving early childhood services under IDEA

Part B.² Educational audiologists deliver a full spectrum of hearing services to all children, particularly those who are primarily eligible for IDEA services due to “hearing impairment,” such as through the support of hearing assistive technology. Audiologists and SLPs provide essential early intervention services and educational support services to children, regardless of their primary disability category, and often provide assistance beyond the scope of IDEA.

It is imperative that ED remain a single, cabinet-level agency to ensure that educational programs and services—particularly those supporting students with disabilities—are developed, overseen, and implemented by individuals with the necessary expertise to ensure their success. This structure is critical to ensuring that all students, especially those with disabilities, receive the services they need throughout their educational journey, from early childhood programs through K-12 schools and into post-secondary education or career pathways.

ASHA is eager to provide input on any legislative proposals your committees may consider in connection to the executive order. We urge that these proposals be informed by the expertise of the professionals who provide the federally mandated services relied on by so many of your constituents. We hope you will seek that input before advancing any related legislation.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please contact Eric Masten, ASHA's director of federal affairs for education, at emasten@asha.org if you or your staff have questions or require additional information regarding the roles of audiologists and SLPs working in educational settings.

Sincerely,



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

cc: United States Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2025). *2024 Member and Affiliate Profile*. <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/surveys/2024-member-affiliate-profile.pdf>

² U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs, *45th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, 2023, Washington, D.C. 2024. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/45th-arc-for-idea.pdf>