



1925-2025
Legacy. Impact. Possibilities.

June 2, 2025

The Honorable Patricia Fahy, Chair
Senate Disabilities Committee
198 State Street
Legislative Office Building, Room 708
Albany, NY 12247

RE: SB 7792

Dear Senator Fahy:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), I write to comment on SB 7792, which protects the communication rights of individuals with disabilities in New York and provides that each person with a disability has the right to communicate in their preferred manner.

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. More than 19,900 ASHA members reside in New York.¹

Communication is defined as the active process of exchanging information and ideas. This process involves both understanding and expression. Forms of expression may include personalized movements, gestures, objects, vocalizations, verbalizations, signs, pictures, symbols, printed words, and output from augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices. When individuals communicate effectively, they are able to independently express needs, wants, feelings, and preferences that others can understand.²

ASHA recognizes the human right of communication, as expressed in the Communication Bill of Rights by the National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities. The Communication Bill of Rights, third edition states the following:³

People have a fundamental right to communicate in all parts of their lives. These communication rights promote full participation across the lifespan. They include:

1. The right to dignity and respect in all interactions.
2. The right to meaningful communication that is culturally and linguistically appropriate.
3. The right to be addressed directly and not be spoken for or talked about as if not there.
4. The right to receive a response to all communication, even when the desired outcome is not possible.
5. The right to participate across settings as full communication partners.
6. The right to interact socially and to build and keep relationships.
7. The right to be given—and to understand—information about objects, actions, events, and people.
8. The right to ask for or refuse objects, actions, events, and people.
9. The right to express preferences and feelings, make comments, and share opinions.

10. The right to make choices from meaningful options.
11. The right to access services and supports for communication across the lifespan.
12. The right to individualized, working augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems and other assistive technology (AT) at all times.

Recommendations

ASHA is concerned that removing the introduced language in the bill that defines “validated” and evidence-based communication methods as appropriate techniques could present communication approaches that are scientifically unproven and do not support independent communication by the individual. Therefore, **ASHA recommends that the term “validated” is added back into the bill and defined as:**

The communication method used is recognized as an appropriate, research-based technique that is accepted by authoritative professional associations and empirical support demonstrating that the method results in independent (not facilitator influenced, prompted, or cued) communication on the part of the person communicating. The methods described in this section shall specifically exclude scientifically unproven or discredited techniques such as facilitated communication, and all its forms and variants, whereby an external person may influence the content of communication by physical, auditory, or visual means including, but not limited to, holding the person's arm while they type or holding a letterboard while the person points to letters. Independent typing or spelling, that is not dependent on external cuing or influence and reflects the person's own thoughts and opinions, shall be considered an effective form of communication. Retaining this information is imperative in ensuring an individual's right to communicate independently.

Thank you for your consideration of ASHA's recommended amendments to SB 7792. 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,



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

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2024). *New York* [Quick Facts]. <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/advocacy/state-flyers/new-york-state-flyer.pdf>

² Beukelman, D. & Mirenda, P. (2013). *Augmentative & Alternative Communication: Supporting Children & Adults with Complex Communication Needs* (4th ed.). Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

³ National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons With Severe Disabilities. (2024). *Communication Bill of Rights* (3rd ed.). <https://www.asha.org/njc/communication-bill-of-rights/>