



1925-2025
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May 19, 2025

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Ranking Member, Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
S-136, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member, Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Capito, Ranking Member Baldwin, Chair Aderholt, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), I am writing to share our strong opposition to the President's proposed fiscal year 2026 (FY26) budget for the U.S. Department of Education (ED).

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 half (49.6%) of ASHA members work in educational facilities, including early childhood, K-12, and higher education 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 communication skills and achieve positive learning outcomes.

We are deeply concerned by the Administration's proposal to reduce spending for ED by 15%, and we are particularly concerned by proposals to:

- Reduce spending for K-12 education by 65% and consolidate funding for Title I of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and other K-12 programs into a single block grant to states;
- Consolidate all funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) into a "Special Education Simplified Funding Program" that would be distributed as a block grant to states; and

- Reduce funding for the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) by 35%.

The potential consolidation of core education programs authorized under IDEA and ESSA raises significant concerns about ED's ability to (1) ensure that federal funding is allocated to individuals and local districts where it is needed the most and (2) guarantee that states and districts comply with federal statutory and appropriations requirements. Additionally, the proposed consolidation of IDEA would (1) eliminate critical professional development programs that support the workforce pipeline of special educators such as audiologists and SLPs and (2) jeopardize the civil rights of families and students to receive services and a free appropriate public education as required by law.

OCR plays a fundamental role in enforcing legal protections for students, particularly those with disabilities. Reductions in funding for OCR could lead to increased delays in addressing both individual and systemic issues associated with ensuring all students are able to access the free appropriate public education they are entitled to under IDEA.

Speech-language pathology services are particularly vital and highly utilized by students served under 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

School-based SLPs have an integral role in students' education as well and are essential members of school faculties. SLPs help students meet the performance standards of the school district and state by assuming a range of responsibilities and working in partnership with others to ensure appropriate services meet students' needs.

Educational audiologists provide comprehensive audiologic services for students with hearing loss and/or auditory processing disorders to maximize students' auditory learning and communication skills. In addition to providing services for students who are primarily eligible for IDEA services due to "hearing impairment," educational audiologists also support all students in the development of listening skills, instruction in the prevention of hearing loss, and provision of accessible acoustic environments.

ASHA urges Congress to maintain, at a minimum, funding for authorized ED programs—including IDEA, Title I, and other K-12 funding streams—at FY 2025-enacted levels. We urge you to reject the President's proposed reductions to these programs, which would have a devastating negative impact on efforts to ensure access to a quality education for all students, especially those with communication disorders.

Finally, ASHA strongly opposes the Administration's plan to dismantle ED and transfer critical programs—including IDEA—to the Department of Health and Human Services. ASHA maintains that it is imperative for ED to remain a single cabinet-level agency to ensure that programs providing all students with access to the services and supports that educational audiologists and school-based SLPs provide are overseen and implemented by those with the experience and expertise to ensure their success. Undermining this structure risks failing the very students these programs are designed to support.

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

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, DC 2024. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/45th-arc-for-idea.pdf>