



1925-2025
Legacy. Impact. Possibilities.

March 19, 2025

The Honorable Mark Noland
Chair, Senate Committee on Business, Labor and Economic Affairs
P.O. Box 200500
Helena, MT 59620-0500

RE: HB 744

Dear Chairman Noland:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), I write to oppose House Bill 744, which allows unlicensed audiology aides and speech-language pathology aides to be employed in school districts by reinstating a category of paraprofessionals that was eliminated in 2021 legislation.

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 (SLPAs); and students. Over 650 ASHA members reside in Montana.¹

ASHA opposes HB 744 because Montana already licenses audiology assistants and SLPAs who have the specialized education and training that is required to meet the needs of the Montana's student population.

Audiology assistants must have either a baccalaureate degree in communication sciences and disorders, an audiology assistant certificate or associate degree, or a high school diploma or equivalent and a minimum of 10 hours of additional board-approved training in audiology. Audiology assistants who are not currently licensed in another state or jurisdiction and who served as unlicensed aides or assistants in Montana prior to January 1, 2024—but do not meet these requirements—must have a minimum of 110 hours of practical experience under the supervision of an audiologist.

SLPAs must have a bachelor's degree in speech-language pathology or communication sciences and disorders or a speech-language pathology assistant certificate or an associate's degree. Those who are not currently licensed in another state or jurisdiction and who served as unlicensed aides or assistants in Montana prior to January 1, 2024—but do not meet these education requirements—must have a minimum of 690 hours of practical experience under the supervision of an SLP.

Allowing **only licensed and appropriately trained and supervised** audiology assistants and SLPAs to practice in schools provides the much-needed support for audiologists and SLP to help address ever growing caseloads without putting the critical, complex needs of students with communication and related disorders at risk.

Thank you for considering ASHA's comments on HB 744. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Eileen Crowe, ASHA's director of state association relations, at ecrowe@asha.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. B. Mayfield-Clarke".

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

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2023). *Montana* [Quick Facts]. <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/advocacy/state-fliers/montana-state-flyer.pdf>