



ASHA
American
Speech-Language-Hearing
Association

March 21, 2023

The Honorable Jim Burgin, Chair
Senate Health Care Committee
300 N. Salisbury Street, Rm. 620
Raleigh, NC 27603

The Honorable Kevin Corbin, Chair
Senate Health Care Committee
300 N. Salisbury Street, Rm. 623
Raleigh, NC 27603

The Honorable Joyce Krawiec, Chair
Senate Health Care Committee
300 N. Salisbury Street, Rm. 308
Raleigh, NC 27603

RE: Support for SB 236 (Audiology)

Dear Chairs Bergin, Corbin, Krawiec, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), I write to support SB 236, legislation to modernize North Carolina's audiology practice laws and ensure the state complies with Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) rules concerning over-the-counter hearing aids.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 228,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Over 6,800 ASHA members reside in North Carolina.¹

Audiologists are health care professionals who provide patient-centered care in the prevention, identification, diagnosis, and evidence-based treatment of hearing, balance, and other auditory disorders for people of all ages. Hearing and balance disorders have medical, psychological, physical, social, educational, and employment implications. Treatment services require audiologists to have knowledge of existing and emerging technologies and interpersonal skills to counsel and guide patients and their family members through the rehabilitative process. In addition, audiologists provide professional and personalized services to minimize the negative impact of these disorders; thereby, leading to improved outcomes and quality of life.

By modernizing the state practice act, SB 236 ensures licensed audiologists can continue to serve people in North Carolina of all ages with hearing, balance, and other auditory related health needs across a variety of care settings.

In addition, this legislation makes necessary changes to state law to comply with the 2022 FDA rule establishing a category of over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids. ASHA supports the creation of OTC hearing devices, which will increase the availability and affordability of hearing aids for many Americans. We also appreciate the care with which the sponsors of SB 236 have addressed the compliance issues created by the OTC rule while protecting the

vital role of audiologists in meeting the hearing health care needs for North Carolinians, particularly among children who are not eligible for OTC devices.

Thank you for considering ASHA's support for SB 236. If you or your staff have questions, please contact Tim Boyd, ASHA's director of state health care and education affairs, at tboyd@asha.org. In addition, you can review more audiology resources related to OTC hearing aids on ASHA's website.²

Sincerely,



Robert M. Augustine, PhD, CCC-SLP
2023 ASHA President

cc: Hon. Gale Adcock

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

² American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Toolkit. <https://www.asha.org/aud/otc-hearing-aid-toolkit>.