



AMERICAN
SPEECH-LANGUAGE-
HEARING
ASSOCIATION

July 2, 2018

The Honorable Val Potter
2185 N. 1400 E
North Logan, UT 84341

RE: H.B. 233

Dear Representative Potter:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write to offer comments on H.B. 233, which provides a teacher salary supplement for those with a degree in special education who are assigned to teach a special education class. I write to request that audiologists and speech-language pathologists (who are consistently paid on the teacher pay scale) also be included in this legislation.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 198,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Audiologists specialize in preventing and assessing hearing and balance disorders as well as providing audiologic treatment, including hearing aids. Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) identify, assess, and treat speech and language problems, including swallowing disorders. More than half of SLPs (54.6%) are employed in educational settings.* Over 1,400 of our members reside in Utah.

School districts are using salary supplements to address significant recruitment and retention concerns not only with classroom teachers, but with special education personnel. Salary supplements are being provided to audiologists and speech-language pathologists (SLPs) who hold ASHA's Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC). ASHA certification is a nationally recognized professional credential that represents a level of excellence in the field, and is widely recognized by insurers, state licensure boards, and the U.S. Department of Education.

SLPs are highly skilled professionals with a minimum of a master's degree in communication disorders from accredited programs recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. SLPs complete a challenging education and training program, a supervised clinical fellowship, and must pass a nationally standardized examination to earn the CCC. To maintain their certification, SLPs must complete 30 certification maintenance hours every three years.

SLPs assess, treat, and help prevent a variety of communication disorders involving speech, language, fluency (e.g., stuttering), voice and resonance problems, cognitive communication disorders such as memory, attention and problem-solving disorders, and swallowing and associated feeding disorders. Without the support of qualified SLPs, students may not have the ability to communicate and thrive in school and their community.

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Currently, 11 states have enacted state-wide salary supplement legislation for individuals who have obtained ASHA's CCC. These supplements range from \$1,750 (provided annually in Rhode Island) to \$6,000 (provided annually in Mississippi and Delaware). In 24 states, there are 96 school districts providing salary supplements ranging from \$500 to \$8,320 annually (provided by the Pasadena school district in Texas). In Utah, at least one district (Iron County School District) is currently providing salary supplements to speech-language pathologists who hold the CCCs.

The CCC is recognized by insurers, including Medicaid, and allow school districts to bill Medicaid for medically necessary services for children with special needs. Salary supplements help school districts secure and retain highly skilled audiologists and SLPs who are needed to provide those services.

ASHA urges you to amend H.B. 233 to include eligibility for audiologists and SLPs in the salary supplement process. Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments on H.B. 233. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Eileen Crowe, ASHA's director of state association relations, at ecrowe@asha.org.

Sincerely,



Elise Davis-McFarland, PhD, CCC-SLP
2018 ASHA President

* American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2018). *ASHA summary membership and affiliation counts, year-end 2017*. Retrieved from www.asha.org.