



February 25, 2019

The Honorable Lisa Wellman  
Chair, Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education Committee  
439 J.B. Cherberg Bldg.  
P.O. Box 40466  
Olympia, WA 98504-0466

RE: Senate Bill 5821

Dear Chairwoman Wellman:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write to support SB 5821, which provides a salary bonus to audiologists and speech-language pathologists possessing certification through the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 204,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Over 3,500 of our members reside in Washington.

A salary bonus can assist in addressing areas experiencing shortages of qualified audiologists and speech-language pathologists (SLPs), such as the more remote areas of Washington, by helping to recruit and retain these professionals who services may bring significant Medicaid funding into the school district. A bonus can also aid in eliminating costly contract employees; thereby:

- improving continuity of service delivery for students;
- providing additional assurance to school administrators by knowing that quality services are being provided to all students in accordance with local, state, and federal requirements; and
- contributing to enhanced satisfaction of parents whose children are receiving quality services from competent professionals.

Currently, 11 states have passed legislation calling for funding of ASHA certified audiologists and SLPs. Additionally, 99 school districts nationwide have provided bonuses to ASHA certified audiologists and SLPs.

### **ASHA Certification: Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC)**

ASHA's Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) is the fundamental standard among major health professions and the most widely recognized symbol of competency for audiologists (CCC-A) and SLPs (CCC-SLP). Certification is important for internal professional recognition and external accountability. To maintain the CCC, audiologists and SLPs must complete professional development activities every three years.

## **Background on Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology**

### *Audiology Professional Qualifications*

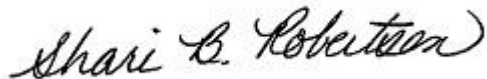
Audiologists earn a clinical doctoral degree and are highly qualified to conduct comprehensive assessments that determine hearing loss, auditory function, balance and related systems, and evaluate, select, and dispense hearing aids. Audiologists also assess the candidacy of individuals with hearing loss for cochlear implants and work with medical teams to provide fitting, mapping, and audiologic rehabilitation to optimize the use of these devices.

### *Speech-Language Pathology Professional Qualifications*

SLPs are highly skilled professionals who, at minimum, hold a master's degree in communication disorders from an accredited program 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. SLPs identify, assess, and treat 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. SLPs provide services in a variety of practice settings ranging from schools to institutions such as hospitals and rehabilitation centers, early intervention programs, and private practice.

Thank you for considering ASHA's position to support SB 5821 and the benefits of providing a salary bonus to qualified, ASHA certified audiologists and SLPs. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Eileen Crowe, ASHA's director of state association relations, at [ecrowe@asha.org](mailto:ecrowe@asha.org).

Sincerely,



Shari B. Robertson, PhD, CCC-SLP  
2019 ASHA President