



ASHA
American
Speech-Language-Hearing
Association

December 6, 2019

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS and Education
Appropriations
United States Senate
136 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS and Education
Appropriations
United States Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Blunt and DeLauro and Ranking Members Murray and Cole:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I urge you to support children with disabilities by providing the highest possible funding levels for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and supporting language to reduce the administrative burden of duplicative paperwork for school-based providers who utilize IDEA funds and bill Medicaid.

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.

Excessive paperwork reduces a school-based provider's ability to deliver the appropriate individualization, frequency, and intensity of services that children with disabilities are entitled to. It also decreases provider morale and increases attrition of staff in school settings.

ASHA was pleased that language to address this issue was included in the [Senate Labor-HHS-Education draft report](#) on page 241:

The Committee recognizes that opportunities exist to streamline access to and improve the quality of special education services and that steps should be taken to reduce administrative barriers for providing health services in and in coordination with schools. The Committee strongly recommends that the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services within the Department coordinate with CMS to develop trainings and provide technical assistance to assist with billing and payment administration for Medicaid services in schools.

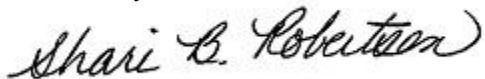
ASHA strongly encourages you to ensure this language is included in the final Labor-HHS-Education Report. In addition, Congress must work to fulfill its promise to fund 40% of the average per-pupil expenditure in public elementary and secondary schools.

IDEA serves more than 6.5 million children in our nation's schools and preserves a free appropriate public education for children with disabilities, including students with communication disorders. Infants and toddlers with disabilities (birth-2) and their families receive early intervention services under IDEA Part C, and children and youth (3-21) receive special education and related services under IDEA Part B. IDEA provides important civil rights protections for children with that must not only be maintained but also strengthened.

ASHA asks Congress to come together and finish work on the FY 2020 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill before the end of the year without resorting to a full-year Continuing Resolution, which would result in flat funding for special education services and supports. Congress must do more to meet the needs of the country's education system to ensure children with disabilities receive the free appropriate public education they are entitled to under law. Increasing funding for the program is a significant step in fulfilling the promise that Congress made.

ASHA looks forward to working with you on this issue and others that are vital to the education and health of our nation's children. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Erik Lazdins, ASHA's associate director of federal affairs, at elazdins@asha.org.

Sincerely,



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

cc: The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Vice Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Nita Lowey, Chairwoman, House Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Kay Granger, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations