



January 28, 2021

The Honorable Representative Dennis Lenz
Montana House of Representatives
House Human Services Committee
P.O. Box 20752
Billings, MT 59104

RE: ASHA Comments on Telemedicine; HB 43

Dear Chairman Lenz:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write in support of HB 43, which expands insurance coverage of telemedicine services and does not require a patient to have a previously established relationship with a specific health care provider to receive services by means of telemedicine.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 211,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists (SLPs); speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Over 540 ASHA members reside in Montana.¹

As the leading national organization for the certification and advancement of audiologists and SLPs, ASHA supports the development and use of telemedicine. ASHA maintains a collection of professional practice documents, including a position statement that defines telemedicine as “the application of telecommunications technology to deliver professional services at a distance by linking clinician to client, or clinician to clinician for assessment, intervention, and/or consultation.”

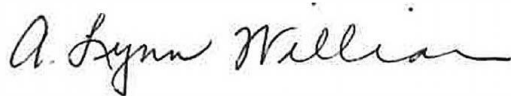
These documents include a technical report and service delivery guidelines that may be accessed on ASHA’s website at <http://www.asha.org/Practice-Portal/Professional-Issues/Telepractice/>.

ASHA strongly supports the use of telemedicine. Research demonstrates the equivalence of telemedicine to in-person service delivery for a wide range of diagnostic and treatment procedures for adults and children.² Studies have shown high levels of patient, clinician, and parent satisfaction supporting telemedicine as an effective alternative to the in-person model for delivery of care.³ Telemedicine expands practitioners’ availability to those in need—regardless of geographic location—saving time and resources for both the provider and the patient.

Despite proven benefits, telemedicine remains underutilized within audiology and speech-pathology practices due to a lack of clear state laws governing its use or mandating appropriate reimbursement for services delivered. House Bill 43 addresses these barriers by generally not requiring a patient to have a previously established patient-provider relationship with a specific health care provider to receive services by means of telemedicine.

Thank you for your consideration of ASHA's position to support HB 43. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Eileen Crowe, ASHA's director, state association relations, at ecrowe@asha.org.

Sincerely,



A. Lynn Williams, PhD, CCC-SLP
2021 ASHA President

cc: Members of the House Human Services Committee
Abigail St. Lawrence, Attorney
Shelby Midboe, President Montana Speech-Language-Hearing Association

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2020). *Montana* [Quick Facts].
<https://www.asha.org/siteassets/uploadedfiles/Montana-State-Flyer.pdf>.

² Grogan-Johnson, S., Alvares, R., Rowan, L., & Creaghead, N. (2010). A pilot study comparing the effectiveness of speech language therapy provided by telemedicine with conventional on-site therapy. *Journal of Telemedicine and Telecare*, 16, 134–139.

³ Ibid.