



Submitted via email: rep-mcnamara@rilegislature.gov
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February 10, 2022

The Honorable Joseph McNamara
Chair
House Committee on Education
State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: HB 7273

Dear Representative McNamara:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write to strongly support HB 7273, which would include speech-language pathology services in special education for children 9 years of age or older in Rhode Island.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 218,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Over 750 ASHA members reside in Rhode Island.¹

The state's definition of special education currently includes speech-language pathology services for students through 8 years of age (i.e., up to the child's 9th birthday). Therefore, after age 9, children are not eligible for standalone speech-language pathology services. This restriction is unique to Rhode Island as no other state has proposed or adopted regulations that limit the provision of speech-language pathology services only as they relate to other services. Decisions about services for students with communication disorders should not be limited by a student's age, but rather driven by a student's unique needs as identified in the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

ASHA applauds you and the other cosponsors for introducing HB 7273 to reinstate the ability to deliver speech-language pathology services in schools to children with primary disorders of articulation, fluency, voice, language deficits related to hearing loss, and singular language deficits.

If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Susan Adams, ASHA's director of state legislative and regulatory affairs, at sadams@asha.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judy Rich". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Judy Rich, EdD, CCC-SLP, BCS-CL
2022 ASHA President

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2021). *Rhode Island* [Quick Facts].
<https://www.asha.org/siteassets/uploadedfiles/rhode-island-state-flyer.pdf>.