



April 9, 2019

The Honorable Rebecca Millett
The Honorable Victoria Kornfield
Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Maine State Legislature
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: LD 642

Dear Senator Millett and Representative Kornfield:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write to oppose LD 642.

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. Audiologists specialize in preventing and assessing hearing and balance disorders as well as providing audiologic treatment, including hearing aids. Speech-language pathologists identify, assess, and treat speech and language problems, including swallowing disorders. Over 880 ASHA members reside in Maine.

ASHA supports many of the tenets in the proposed legislation including ensuring that a child who is deaf or hard of hearing (D/HH) has a functional language whether it is American Sign Language (ASL), spoken language, cued speech, or other language as well as a combination of languages. ASHA supports the development of parent resources that are comprehensive and balanced so that parents can determine the best language and communication mode(s) for their child and family. ASHA believes that providing information to families will empower them to be active impactful advocates during individualized family service plan (IFSP)/individualized education program (IEP) meetings.

ASHA supports requirements that state lead agencies would develop parent resources, which ASHA believes are both appropriate and consistent with the relevant federal law. ASHA further supports the state lead agency utilization of experts across the state to help select milestones, assessments, and educational recommendations to help parents navigate the IFSP/IEP process.

ASHA does not support the creation of an advisory council that is both costly and duplicative. Furthermore, we do not support legislation proposed in some states that:

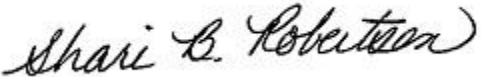
- endorses one communication mode over others;
- restricts parent decision-making authority;
- places additional costly and duplicative requirements on states and school districts; and
- creates additional requirements (e.g., assessments, data collection, funding) for one disability over others.

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ASHA understands that children with disabilities, including those who are D/HH, may not always have the services and supports they need to access the curriculum and achieve academic success. We are committed to strengthening existing laws to ensure that state and local agencies adhere to federal law. ASHA believes that providing families with needed resources and tools will empower them to identify the most appropriate language/communication mode and impact the decisions made by the IFSP/IEP team.

Thank you for your consideration of ASHA's position to oppose LD 642. 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 "Shari B. Robertson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "S".

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