



April 10, 2024

Mr. Haedon Brunelle  
Oregon Department of Education  
255 Capitol St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Speech-Language Stipend Program

Dear Mr. Brunelle:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), I write to

- express support for the Speech-Language Stipend Program in providing stipends to both speech-language pathologists (SLPs) and speech-language pathology assistants (SLPAs) working in school districts for a minimum of two years; and
- recommend amendments to the proposed regulations.

ASHA is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 234,000 members, certificate holders, and affiliates who are audiologists; SLPs; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology assistants; and students. Over 2,400 ASHA members reside in Oregon.<sup>1</sup>

SLPs are uniquely educated and trained to assess and treat speech, language, swallowing, and cognitive communication disorders in children and adults. These services help children acquire language and enable people to recover essential skills to communicate about their health and safety; swallow adequate nutrition safely; and have sufficient attention, memory, and organizational skills to function in their environment.

ASHA supports the Speech-Language Stipend Program that would provide a

- \$9,000 stipend per academic year for qualifying SLPs; and
- \$2,000 stipend per academic year for certified, appropriately trained, and supervised SLPAs.

SLPs working in school settings often face high caseloads and high volumes of paperwork while working with a range of students who may have complex communication disorders or may be considered medically fragile.<sup>2</sup> In addition, school practitioners may have to take on duties outside of their normal scope due to personnel shortages.<sup>3</sup> As a result, schools may have challenges with recruiting and retaining SLPs. Providing annual stipends can help lessen the burden on SLPs and the SLPAs they supervise. It may also help cut down on the many contractors who are temporarily filling vacant positions at higher costs.

ASHA recommends the following amendment to the proposed regulations:

In Section 581-017-0880 (f), we recommend substituting “student” with “speech-language pathologist or speech-language pathology assistant” in order to clarify that the stipend applies to the time that the practitioner is in their district employment year.

Thank you for considering ASHA’s support for this program and our proposed amendment. These regulations will help to ensure both enhanced recruitment and retention of highly qualified, licensed, and certified professionals who serve students of Oregon’s schools. 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,



Tena L. McNamara, AuD, CCC-A/SLP  
2024 ASHA President

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<sup>1</sup> American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2022). *Oregon* [Quick Facts]. <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/advocacy/state-fliers/oregon-state-flyer.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2022). *2022 Schools Survey: SLP Caseload and Workload Characteristics*. <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/surveys/2022-schools-survey-slp-caseload.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2022). *2022 Schools Survey: SLP Workforce and Work Conditions*. <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/surveys/2022-schools-survey-slp-workforce.pdf>.