



AMERICAN
SPEECH-LANGUAGE-
HEARING
ASSOCIATION

March 18, 2016

Mark Formby, Chair
Revenue and Expenditure General Bills Committee
Capitol - Room 402-B
Post Office Box 1018
Jackson, MS 39215

RE: H.B. 336

Dear Chairman Formby and Committee Members:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's members, I am writing to support the continued funding and efforts for loan forgiveness for speech-language pathologists. We commend Representative Nolan Mettatal for his support of H.B. 336.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 186,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Over 1,610 of our members reside in Mississippi.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the profession of speech-language pathology is expected to grow faster than average through 2022. Mississippi, averages over 50 annual openings for speech-language pathologists (SLPs). According to BLS, in 2014 the average salary range for SLPs in Mississippi was \$45,000-\$66,000. Surrounding states—including Arkansas, Alabama, Texas, and Georgia—all had significantly higher salaries that ranged from \$66,000-\$75,000.

As college tuition continues to increase, speech-language pathology graduates will carry significant debt. According to the 2014 ASHA Schools survey, SLPs in rural areas (33%) were more likely to have student debt than those who worked in cities (26%). Offering loan forgiveness programs for SLPs willing to work in low income, hard to staff schools, as Mississippi law requires, will entice new graduates to stay in the state and help maintain a stable workforce.

We sincerely appreciate your efforts to support and provide relief for the debt being incurred by speech-language pathologists in the state of Mississippi.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments. Should you have any questions or need further information, please contact Cheris Frailey, ASHA's director of state education and legislative advocacy, at cfrailey@asha.org or by phone at 301-296-5666, or Janet Deppe, ASHA's director of state advocacy, at jdeppe@asha.org or by phone at 301-296-5668.

Sincerely,

Jayne A. Handelsman, PhD, CCC-A
2016 ASHA President