



**ASHA**  
American  
Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association

March 27, 2020

Stephanie Grisham  
Director of Communications  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Ms. Grisham:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), I write to request immediate action to ensure that all public briefings regarding the pandemic of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-2019) include a qualified American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter who is present and visible on the broadcast screen.

ASHA is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 211,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. ASHA's request is on behalf of the 37.5 million individuals who report some degree of hearing loss.<sup>1</sup>

ASL interpreters are essential in order to convey critical information about the pandemic, provide status reports and plans of action, share resources, and address the concerns of citizens who rely on this mode of communication. The omission of interpreters reflects a failure to acknowledge and address the needs of a significant segment of the country's population. ASHA finds the lack of interpreters at these briefings unacceptable, and inconsistent with the current practice of nearly all state governors, as well as with the recent decision by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to release all of its information on COVID-19 in ASL.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Theresa H. Rodgers, MA, CCC-SLP  
2020 ASHA President

---

<sup>1</sup> Blackwell, D.L., Lucas, J.W., & Clarke, T.C. (2014). Summary health statistics for U.S. adults: National Health Interview Survey, 2012. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 10(260).