



March 1, 2022

The Honorable Scott K. Saiki  
415 South Beretania Street  
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 431  
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: Newborn Hearing Reporting System; HB 986

Dear Representative Saiki:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write to support HB 986, which requires the establishment, implementation, and evaluation of a statewide system for hearing screening and diagnostic audiologic evaluation to identify infants who are deaf or hard of hearing, and for referral and enrollment of these infants in early intervention services by the Department of Health.

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. Audiologists specialize in preventing and assessing hearing and balance disorders as well as providing audiologic treatment, including hearing aids. Over 500 ASHA members reside in Hawaii.<sup>1</sup>

ASHA supports HB 986, which would also require audiologists and physicians who specialize in hearing function and perform the diagnostic audiologic evaluations for infants, to report to the Department of Health the diagnostic audiologic evaluation results of those infants who do not pass the hearing screening test or are diagnosed as deaf or hard of hearing up to 3 years old.

Newborn hearing screening is now the standard of care in hospitals nationwide. In 2014, 96.1% of babies born in the United States had their hearing screened before one month of age and 6,163 infants were diagnosed with permanent hearing loss.<sup>2</sup> According to the Joint Committee on Infant Hearing, there is a growing body of literature indicating that when identification and intervention occur at no later than six months of age for infants who are deaf or hard of hearing, the infants perform as much as 20% to 40% higher on school-related measures (vocabulary, articulation, intelligibility, social adjustment, and behavior).<sup>3</sup>

Thank you for helping to ensure proper hearing health care for infants and young children in Hawaii. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Eileen Crowe, ASHA's director, state association relations, at [ecrowe@asha.org](mailto:ecrowe@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

---

<sup>1</sup> American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2021). *Hawaii* [Quick Facts].

<https://www.asha.org/siteassets/uploadedfiles/hawaii-state-flyer.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). *Newborn Hearing Screening*.

<https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/professional-issues/newborn-hearing-screening/>.

<sup>3</sup> Joint Committee on Infant Hearing. (2007). *Year 2007 Position Statement: Principles and Guidelines for Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Programs*. [https://www.infanthearing.org/resources/2007\\_JCIH.pdf](https://www.infanthearing.org/resources/2007_JCIH.pdf).