



July 30, 2026

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, MD
Chair, Health, Education, Labor and
Pensions Committee
United States Senate
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member, Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions Committee
United States Senate
648 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cassidy and Ranking Member Sanders:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), I am writing to share our views on legislation that the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee is scheduled to consider on Thursday, July 30, 2026.

We appreciate your support for preventing the transfer of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) out of the U.S. Department of Education (ED). While ASHA appreciates that S. 5038, the Special Education Administration Protection Act, would prevent the transfer of OSEP from ED to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, **we instead urge the Committee to favorably report S. 5046, which would prohibit moving the administration of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) from ED to any other federal agency.**

ASHA is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 247,000 members, certificate holders, and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists (SLPs); speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology assistants; and students. Nearly 47% of ASHA members work in early childhood and K-12 educational settings.¹ These professionals play a central role in supporting students, families, and school staff in early intervention, early childhood, and both general and special education K-12 settings. The services provided by ASHA members are essential to helping children and students develop effective cognitive-communication skills and achieve positive learning outcomes.

Speech-language pathology services are particularly vital and highly utilized by students served under IDEA. According to the Department of Education's 47th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2025, speech or language impairments account for the second most common primary disability category for children receiving services under IDEA Part B (32% for ages 3 to 5 and 18% for ages 5 to 21).²

Audiologists and SLPs provide essential early intervention services and educational support services to children, regardless of their primary disability category, and often provide assistance beyond the scope of IDEA.

ASHA supports S. 5046 to ensure that the functions of OSEP, the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Office of Postsecondary Education, and the Office of Indian Education remain within ED. It is important that IDEA, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA), and other essential education programs continue to be overseen and implemented by those with the experience and expertise necessary to ensure that all students have access to the services and supports educational audiologists and school-based SLPs provide.

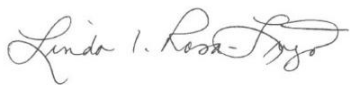
In the explanatory statement to accompany the funding bill for the current federal fiscal year (P.L. 119-75, Division B, Title III), Congress reiterated that no authorities exist for ED “to transfer its fundamental responsibilities under numerous authorizing and appropriations laws”—such as IDEA or ESSA—to other federal agencies. While this language does not specifically prohibit ED from entering into interagency agreements (IAAs), congressional intent appears to clearly indicate that ED should continue to fully administer and implement all of the education programs as statutorily required by law.

ASHA strongly supports S. 5046 and the continued existence of a well-resourced, independent, cabinet-level ED. We oppose efforts—such as IAAs, staffing reductions and the cancelation of grants and contracts—that make it harder for states, local districts, and institutions of higher education to support student achievement and that hinder access to critical services provided by ASHA’s school-based members. ED plays a fundamental role in enforcing legal protections for students, particularly those with disabilities, and in supporting educators by elevating best practices and complementing the efforts of state and local education agencies.

ASHA supports S. 5046, and we encourage you to work with your colleagues to ensure that ED continues its vital role to ensure a quality education and related support for all students and their families.

ASHA appreciates the opportunity to provide input on this legislation. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Eric Masten, ASHA’s director of federal affairs for education, at emasten@asha.org.

Sincerely,



Linda I. Rosa-Lugo, EdD, CCC-SLP
2026 ASHA President

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2026). *2025 Member & Affiliate Profile*. <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/surveys/2025-asha-member-and-affiliate-profile.pdf>

² U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs. (June 2026). *47th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2025*. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/2025-annual-report-to-congress-on-the-individuals-with-disabilities-education-act-idea/>