



March 23, 2026

The Honorable Heather Bagnall
Chair
House Health Committee
240 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: ASHA Opposition to SB 917

Dear Chair Bagnall and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), I write in opposition to SB 917, which would disrupt access to care and create administrative and financial burdens for audiologists seeking to provide basic health screenings.

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. Over 4,000 ASHA members reside in Maryland, including 365 audiologists.¹

The House is considering Senate Bill 917, legislation that could have important implications for audiologists and the patients they serve. In 2024 and 2025, bipartisan legislation modernized Maryland's audiology practice act to reflect current components of practice, including health screenings. SB 917 would narrow that authority by limiting screenings to only those "related to auditory and vestibular conditions in the ear." If applied strictly, this change would roll back those recent updates and constrain routine clinical workflows that protect patient safety.

While SB 917 has been characterized as a technical clarification, a strict interpretation could prevent audiologists from completing required reporting for Medicare's Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) quality measures. Many MIPS measures include brief health screening questions that extend beyond hearing or balance but remain squarely within the audiologist's scope to ensure patient safety and quality of life. For example, audiologists must report a screening measure for elder maltreatment designed to identify potential abuse or neglect. If audiologists are prohibited from performing such screenings, they may be unable to meet federal reporting requirements and could face negative Medicare payment adjustments through no fault of their own, undermining practice sustainability and, ultimately, Maryland patients' access to timely care.

For these reasons, ASHA opposes SB 917 so Maryland law does not interfere with access to care or cause unnecessary administrative and financial burdens for audiologists. Thank you for your continued support of audiologists and the audiology profession. We appreciate your consideration of ASHA's position on SB 917.

If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Tim Boyd, ASHA's director of state health care and audiology affairs, at tboyd@asha.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda I. Rosa-Lugo".

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

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2025). *Maryland* [Quick Facts]. <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/advocacy/state-flyers/maryland-state-flyer.pdf>