



April 5, 2023

The Honorable Jamie Allard
Alaska House of Representatives
120 4th St
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: Deaf and Hearing-Impaired Students; HB 111

Dear Representative Allard:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write to express opposition to HB 111, which does not adequately include a comprehensive decision making team in the final determination of the primary language, or method of communication, for deaf and hearing impaired children.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 228,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists (SLPs); speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Over 400 ASHA members reside in Alaska.¹

ASHA supports the family's right to decide on the appropriate language and/or communication method for their child who is deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing and their family, and that these children should have a strong language foundation. ASHA also supports the creation of resources and supports to help families understand developmental milestones, educational options, services, and supports for their children. ASHA does not support the language in the bill calling for a determination of the primary language or method of communication for a deaf or hearing impaired child to be done by an assessment of the child's aptitude for acquiring American Sign Language by an American Sign Language Specialist. The child's Individualized Education Program team, including audiologists and SLPs, should have equal weight in determining the communication needs, treatment, and support for the child and their families.

Thank you for considering ASHA's opposition to this bill. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Eileen Crowe, ASHA's director, state association relations, at ecrowe@asha.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert M. Augustine". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert M. Augustine, PhD, CCC-SLP
2023 ASHA President

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2022). *Alaska* [Quick Facts].
<https://www.asha.org/siteassets/advocacy/state-fliers/alaska-state-flyer.pdf>