



March 2, 2023

The Honorable Kevin Wallace
House Committee on Appropriations and Budget Chair
2300 N. Lincoln Blvd. State Capitol
State Capitol Building, Room 200
Oklahoma City, OK 73105-4805

RE: HB 1037

Dear Representative Wallace:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), I write to support HB 1037, which makes school-based audiologists and speech-language pathologists (SLPs) who hold an ASHA Certificate of Clinical Competence eligible for annual bonuses in the amount of \$5,000.

ASHA is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 223,000 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. SLPs identify, assess, and treat speech, language, swallowing, and cognitive communication disorders. These services help children acquire language and enable people to recover essential skills to communicate about their health and safety, to swallow adequate nutrition safely, and to have sufficient attention, memory, and organizational skills to function in their environment. Over 2,500 ASHA members reside in Oklahoma and 60% of those members work in education facilities.¹

Providing an annual \$5,000 supplement helps to ensure enhanced recruitment and retention of highly qualified professionals who serve those most in need in the Oklahoma schools. Audiologists and SLPs working in school settings often face high caseloads and high volumes of paperwork while working with a range of students that may be facing complex communication disorders or may be considered medically fragile.² Additionally, these practitioners may have to take on duties outside of their normal scope due to personnel shortages in schools.³ As a result, schools may have challenges with recruitment and retention because of the daily challenges these professionals face in this workplace setting.

Thank you for considering ASHA's support to HB 1037. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Doanne Ward-Williams, ASHA's director, state affairs, at dwardwilliams@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). *Oklahoma* [Quick Facts]. <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/advocacy/state-fliers/oklahoma-state-flyer.pdf>.

² American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2022). *2022 School Survey: SLP Caseload and Workload Characteristics*. <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/surveys/2022-schools-survey-slp-caseload.pdf>.

³ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2022). *2022 School Survey: SLP Workforce and Work Conditions*. <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/surveys/2022-schools-survey-slp-workforce.pdf>.