



Submitted via e-mail: [Kathycrawford@house.mi.gov](mailto:Kathycrawford@house.mi.gov)

June 23, 2020

Honorable Kathy Crawford  
S0887 House Office Building  
124 North Capitol Avenue  
Lansing, MI 48933

RE: HB 5836

Dear Chairwoman Crawford and Members of the Committee on Families, Children and Seniors:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write to comment on HB 5836, which creates a resource for parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing and establishes an advisory committee to recommend language development milestones for inclusion in the parent resource and existing assessments appropriate for use with children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 211,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Over 5,400 ASHA members reside in Michigan.<sup>1</sup>

ASHA strongly supports the intent of HB 5836, which is to ensure young children who are deaf or hard of hearing (D/HH) have a strong language foundation for kindergarten readiness and academic success. ASHA also supports a family's right to decide the most appropriate language(s) (e.g., American Sign Language, spoken language, or both), communication mode(s) (e.g., augmentative and alternative communication), and education plan for their child. However, HB 5836 includes provisions that regrettably undermine these goals and create unnecessary and burdensome requirements that interfere with the decision-making authority of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).<sup>2</sup>

### **Specification of English As A Preferred Language/Communication Mode**

HB 5836 establishes English, defined in the bill as "spoken English, written English or English communicated with or without the use of visual supplements," as the preferred term for spoken and written language. ASHA supports the use of the term "spoken language" to include native and non-native English speakers.

### **ASHA Opposes the Creation of An Advisory Committee**

ASHA recommends eliminating the proposed advisory committee, which would advise the Department of Education on the selection of appropriate milestones for the parent resource and language assessment program. Creating an advisory committee is burdensome, unnecessary, and costly and may undermine the decision-making authority of the IFSP/IEP team, which must

include professionals knowledgeable about the assessment and services needed for children with disabilities, including those children who are D/HH and their parents.

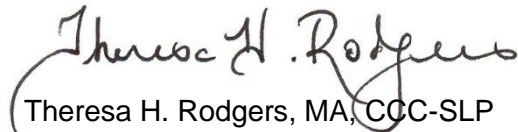
### **ASHA Supports A Parent's Right to Decide and the Development of a Comprehensive Parent Resource**

ASHA has model language that:

- emphasizes a parent's right to decide the language(s) and communication mode(s) that are best for their child and family;
- requires the state lead agency to create a comprehensive and balanced parent/family resource that includes existing developmental milestones, assessment information, and education options for children who are D/HH and encourages the lead agency to utilize experts in the state to advise them on the creation of the resource;
- strengthens existing federal IDEA legislation that requires a comprehensive assessment and the development of an intervention plan that utilizes the full complement of qualified providers to ensure that all children who are D/HH receive the services they need to develop a strong language foundation for future academic success; and
- requires the state lead agency to distribute the parent/family resource widely to families, medical specialists/facilities, parent resource centers, early intervention and preschool programs, as well as school districts throughout the state so that families have the tools and resources they need to fully participate and impact decision-making in IFSP and IEP meetings.<sup>3</sup>

Thank you for your consideration of ASHA's position on HB 5836. If you or your staff have any questions or would like additional information on ASHA's model language, please contact Janet Deppe, ASHA's director of state affairs, at [jdeppe@asha.org](mailto:jdeppe@asha.org).

Sincerely,



Theresa H. Rodgers, MA, CCC-SLP  
2020 ASHA President

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<sup>1</sup> American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2020). *Michigan*. Retrieved from <https://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/Michigan-State-Flyer.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 34 U.S.C. § 300.320 et seq.

<sup>3</sup> American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). *State Issue Brief: Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) State Legislation*. Retrieved from <https://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/LEAD-K-Issue-Brief.pdf>.