



Submitted via email to representative.matt.claman@akleg.gov

March 18, 2020

The Honorable Matt Claman
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
State Capitol, Room 118
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: House Bill 299

Dear Representative Claman:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write to express strong opposition to the Right to Earn a Living Act (HB 299), which would allow unlicensed individuals to pursue their chosen profession; seek repeal of an occupational regulation that limits their ability to practice; and be awarded attorney and associated fees if their claim is upheld in the courts.

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 400 ASHA members reside in Alaska.

ASHA is opposed to HB 299 because it eliminates the necessary health, safety, and welfare protections for consumers allowing individuals who have not met the minimum standards for licensure to provide services to the states most vulnerable citizens. It further allows those individuals to seek attorney fees and other compensation from the state's already stretched budget and allows individuals to petition to have the licensure laws repealed or modified.

Regulatory oversight, legislated through occupational licensure, is the accepted practice for consumer protection. The professions of audiology and speech-language pathology are regulated through licensure in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The public relies on the expertise of licensure boards and advisory committees and their staff to ensure that those in practice are held to the highest standards of the profession. Modifications to licensure requires a thorough review by the board and should only be conducted when accepted national standards are modified. Conducting a review of the licensure standards for the purpose of eliminating licensure is unnecessary and costly.

Licensure and ASHA Certification

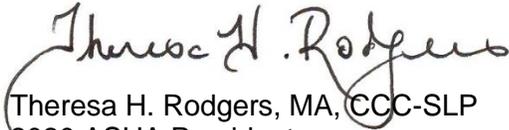
Both licensure and ASHA certification help ensure the quality provision of audiology and speech-language pathology services. State licensure provides consumer protection and recourse against incompetent practitioners or those acting in an unethical manner so that they may be removed from practice. ASHA's Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) is the fundamental standard among major health professions and the most widely recognized symbol of competency for audiologists (CCC-A) and speech-language pathologists (CCC-SLP). To maintain their CCC, audiologists and SLPs must accumulate 30 professional development hours every three years. Individuals holding the CCC are expected to abide by ASHA's Code of Ethics. While certification is important for internal professional recognition and external

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accountability, licensure is important to legally work and provides minimum standards of competency that protect the public from harm.

ASHA appreciates your consideration of our position on HB 299. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Eileen Crowe, ASHA's director of state association relations, at ecrowe@asha.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Theresa H. Rodgers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "T".

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