



Submitted via email: wlippert@leg.state.vt.us

February 4, 2020

The Honorable William Lippert Jr.
Chair
House Committee on Health Care
Vermont General Assembly
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

RE: H. 723

Dear Representative Lippert:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write in support of H. 723, which would expand health insurance coverage of telemedicine to include all health care services delivered through store-and-forward means.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 204,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Over 525 ASHA members reside in Vermont.

As the leading national organization for the certification and advancement of audiologists and speech-language pathologists, ASHA supports the development and use of telehealth or “telepractice.” ASHA has a collection of professional practice documents, including a position statement that defines telepractice as “the application of telecommunications technology to deliver professional services at a distance by linking clinician to client or clinician to clinician for assessment, intervention, and/or consultation.”¹

ASHA strongly supports the use of telepractice because research demonstrates the equivalence of telepractice to in-person service delivery for a wide range of diagnostic and treatment procedures for adults and children.² Studies have shown high levels of patient, clinician, and parent satisfaction supporting telepractice as an effective alternative to the in-person model for delivery of care.³ Telepractice expands practitioners’ availability to those in need—regardless of geographic location—saving time and resources for both the provider and the patient.

Despite the proven benefits of telepractice, it is still underutilized within audiology and speech-language pathology due to a lack of clear state laws governing its use or mandating appropriate reimbursement for services delivered via telepractice. H. 723 addresses these barriers by firmly establishing what constitutes telepractice and how practitioners can use telecommunications tools and information technology appropriately when providing services. Further, the legislation establishes that services delivered via telepractice should be reimbursed by insurers on the same basis as in-person services.

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Thank you for your consideration of ASHA's position to support H. 723. Should you have any questions, please contact Susan Adams, ASHA's director of state legislative and regulatory advocacy, at sadams@asha.org.

Sincerely,



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

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). Telepractice. Retrieved from <https://www.asha.org/Practice-Portal/Professional-Issues/Telepractice/>.

² Grogan-Johnson, S., Alvares, R., Rowan, L., & Creaghead, N. (2010). A pilot study comparing the effectiveness of speech language therapy provided by telemedicine with conventional on-site therapy. *Journal of Telemedicine and Telecare*, 16, 134–139.

³ Ibid.