



May 4, 2020

The Honorable Cindy Axne  
330 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Axne:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write to thank you for your leadership on introducing the COVID-19 Telehealth Response Act.

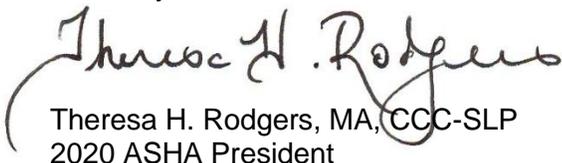
The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 211,000 individuals who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Audiologists specialize in preventing and assessing hearing and balance disorders as well as providing audiologic treatment, including hearing aids. Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) identify, assess, and treat speech and language problems, including swallowing disorders.

As you know, it is critical to ensure that audiologists and SLPs can continue providing medically necessary services and treatments safely and effectively during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Members of both professions are licensed in every state to provide diagnostic and treatment services, while many private payers, and other government programs, such as Medicaid, allow them to provide care using telehealth. Until April 30, arbitrary and unnecessary restrictions prevented these health care professionals from providing telehealth services to Medicare beneficiaries who are at high-risk to this deadly virus because of their age and/or underlying health conditions.

ASHA appreciates your previous support for the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (Public Law 116-136), which included provisions enabling the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary to waive restrictions on the types of clinicians who can provide telehealth services during the emergency period, potentially to include audiologists and SLPs. The COVID-19 Telehealth Response Act would have ensured that HHS followed congressional intent by allowing these providers to continue providing important hearing, balance, speech, language, swallowing, and cognitive care to Medicare beneficiaries remotely and in a manner that promotes the safety of both patients and providers. ASHA is pleased that the Secretary has now exercised authority consistent with congressional intent provided in the CARES Act and with your legislation.

Thank you again for your leadership. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Jerry White, ASHA's director of federal affairs for health care, at [jwhite@asha.org](mailto:jwhite@asha.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Theresa H. Rodgers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Theresa" being the most prominent part.

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