



AMERICAN  
SPEECH-LANGUAGE-  
HEARING  
ASSOCIATION

June 25, 2018

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS and Education  
Appropriations  
United States Senate  
304 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS and Education  
Appropriations  
United States Senate  
154 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Senator Murray:

As the Subcommittee prepares to mark up the fiscal year (FY) 2019 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill, I write on behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association to urge you to fund the universal newborn hearing screening programs at their full authorization level of \$11,026,800. The Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Act of 2017 (S. 652/H.R. 1539) was signed into law by President Trump and reauthorized funding through 2022.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 198,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students.

Nearly 33 children are born every day with a hearing disorder, making it the most common congenital condition in the United States. Failure to fully fund these programs may leave thousands of children with undiagnosed hearing loss. It would also deprive children of early interventions that improve their language skills and development—interventions they desperately need.

EHDI is one of the nation's most important public health programs, offering early hearing screening and interventions to all newborns, infants, and young children in every state. When the Child Health Act of 2000—which established the state-based universal newborn hearing screening programs—was passed, only 40% of newborns were being screened. Yet with today's programs, approximately 97% of newborns receive an audiologic screening totaling 4 million infants and children in the year 2013 alone.

Thank you for your efforts on this important area in children's health. ASHA looks forward to working with you on this issue and others that are vital to our nation's children. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Ingrida Lusic, ASHA's director of federal and political affairs, at [ilusic@asha.org](mailto:ilusic@asha.org).

Sincerely,

Elise Davis-McFarland, PhD, CCC-SLP  
2018 ASHA President

cc: The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman, Committee on Appropriations  
The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Vice Chairman, Committee on Appropriations