



Submitted via e-mail: [SenLTheis@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:SenLTheis@senate.michigan.gov)

December 8, 2020

Senator Lana Theis  
201 Townsend Street  
Suite #7400  
Lansing, MI 48933

RE: HB 5836

Dear Chairwoman Theis and Members of the Education and Career Readiness Committee:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write to express opposition to HB 5836 as currently drafted. As you know, this legislation mandates the development of a resource for use by parents to monitor and track deaf and hard-of-hearing children's developmental milestones and requires the Department of Public Instruction to create an advisory committee composed primarily of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to identify milestones for inclusion in the parent resource.

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 5,470 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, as currently drafted, HB 5836 includes elements that 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> For example, the bill requires the Department to create a 13-member advisory committee to identify the resources that need to be included in the parent resource. ASHA views the creation of an advisory committee as unnecessary and costly. The Department can identify milestones and resources to include in the parent resource using experts from across the state as needed.

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

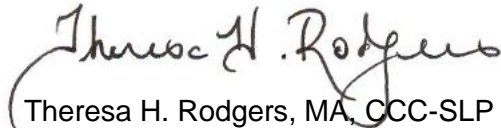
HB 5836 establishes English, defined in the bill as "spoken English, written English, or English with the use of visual supplements," as a preferred method of language communication included as part of the family resource. ASHA supports the use of the term "spoken language" as opposed to English, which is confusing to non-native English speakers. ASHA also endorses the parents' right to choose the appropriate language/communication mode for their child and family.

### **Creation of An Advisory Committee**

HB 5836 proposes that a newly created advisory committee select language developmental milestones for inclusion in the family resource. ASHA recommends its elimination. The bill already empowers the Department of Public Instruction with developing the family resource and identifying developmental milestones. Additionally, the requirements of the bill to track and report milestones are already required under IDEA to be included in the IFSP or IEP planning process. The creation of an advisory committee would undermine the decision-making authority of the IFSP/IEP team established under IDEA, 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.

Thank you for your consideration of ASHA's position on HB 5836. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Janet Deppe, ASHA's director of state affairs, at [jdeppe@asha.org](mailto:jdeppe@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 initial "T".

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

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<sup>1</sup> American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. 2020. *Michigan State Flyer*.  
<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.