



ASHA
American
Speech-Language-Hearing
Association

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March 31, 2021

The Honorable Jose Rodriguez
The Honorable Manny Diaz, Chair
The Honorable Jason Brodeur, Vice-Chair
Health Policy Committee
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

RE: Changes to S.B. 700

Dear Senator Rodriguez, Chairman Diaz, and Vice Chairman Brodeur:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write to comment on S.B. 700, which changes Florida's requirement for a hearing evaluation before dispensing a hearing aid to persons ages 18 and older and removes the state ban on dispensing hearing aids through the mail. I am also requesting an amendment that would include the use of teleaudiology in the fitting and dispensing of hearing aids.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 218,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Over 11,000 ASHA members reside in Florida.¹

In ASHA's previous letter to the Committee dated February 22, 2021, I expressed opposition to S.B. 700 based on provisions in the bill that would weaken Florida's requirement for a hearing evaluation before dispensing a hearing aid by instituting a medical waiver. As stated in my letter, hearing aid fitting and verification for adults is a complex process representing one part of a comprehensive aural rehabilitation plan that necessitates a professional evaluation. Without a proper assessment, adults seeking treatment for suspected hearing loss may not be appropriately referred for treating an underlying health condition causing their hearing impairment.

However, ASHA maintains that a change is needed for Florida's hearing aid dispensing requirements to facilitate the use of teleaudiology in the fitting and dispensing of hearing aids. Doing so would ensure that audiologists, licensed in Florida, can apply new technologies and techniques that would improve access to hearing care for Floridians.

If the Committee were to alter S.B. 700 to **remove the waiver option**—while improving the hearing evaluation procedures to **facilitate using teleaudiology** in the fitting and dispensing of hearing aids—ASHA would no longer oppose this legislation and would be supportive of its advancement as amended. In considering such changes, ASHA appreciates Senator Rodriguez and the Committee's support for maintaining the vital role of audiologists in conducting a hearing evaluation before fitting and dispensing a hearing aid.

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ASHA and its state affiliate, the Florida Association of Speech-language Pathologists and Audiologists (FLASHA), are dedicated to increasing access and treatment for all individuals with hearing loss. We look forward to working with you and state agencies on the implementation of S.B. 700 in a manner that helps Floridians with hearing loss receive the appropriate hearing aid technology that they need and deserve to achieve success.

Thank you for your consideration of ASHA's comments on S.B. 700. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Tim Boyd, ASHA's director of state health care and education affairs, at tboyd@asha.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. Lynn Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

A. Lynn Williams, PhD, CCC-SLP
2021 ASHA President

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2020). *Florida* [Quick Facts]. <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/uploadedfiles/Florida-State-Flyer.pdf>.