February 26, 2016

Senator Bruce Rampelberg, Chair
Health and Human Services Committee
State Capitol Building
500 East Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501

RE: H.B. 1141

Dear Senator Rampelberg and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for more than 182,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Over 445 of our members reside in South Dakota.

On behalf of our members, I am writing to provide comments on H.B. 1141, which would license individuals offering applied behavioral analysis (ABA) services for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

We offer the following amendments to H.B. 1141:

1. In Section 3, we recommend adding communication assessment and treatment to the list of services that are not the practice of ABA;
2. In Section 5, (3) add audiologists and speech-language pathologists to the list of providers that the Act would not apply to;

ASD is a complex neurobiological disorder characterized by social impairment, communication difficulties, and repetitive and stereotyped behaviors. Social interaction and communication, speech production, understanding and using spoken and written language are examples of neurodevelopmental functions and are not solely “behaviors.” Speech-language and social communication impairments are the core features of individuals with ASD for which speech-language pathologists (SLPs) play a central role in assessment and treatment.

We believe that SLPs should be identified as appropriate service providers for individuals with ASD, as speech-language pathologists are able to prioritize intervention objectives and coordinate planning for communicative success. While ABA therapists may work on an individual’s behaviors, an SLP focuses on understanding and use of language, social communication, literacy, speech production, and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). Utilizing a team of qualified professionals including physicians, mental health professionals, behavioral therapists, SLPs, and others will ensure that the individual diagnosed
with ASD will have a comprehensive assessment and receive the full complement of services necessary to meet his/her unique needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. Should you have any questions, please contact Janet Deppe, ASHA’s director of state advocacy, at jdeppe@asha.org.

Sincerely,

Jaynee A. Handelsman, PhD, CCC-A
2016 ASHA President