



1925-2025
Legacy. Impact. Possibilities.

February 10, 2025

The Honorable Delegate Atterbeary
Maryland General Assembly
131 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 689

Dear Delegate Atterbeary:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), I write to express support for House Bill 689, which authorizes school systems to utilize reimbursement funds for providers, including audiologists and speech pathologists.

ASHA is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 234,000 members, certificate holders, and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists (SLPs); speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology assistants; and students. Over 4,200 ASHA members reside in Maryland.¹

SLPs—referred to as “speech pathologists” in the proposed legislation—assess and treat speech, language, hearing, swallowing, balance, and cognitive communication disorders in both children and adults. Speech-language pathology services in school settings help children acquire language and enable individuals to recover essential skills to communicate about their health and safety, to safely swallow adequate nutrition, and to have sufficient attention, memory, and organizational skills to function in their environment. Between 2020 and 2030, Maryland is expected to have a 21% increase in demand for SLPs.²

Low salaries are one of the greatest challenges faced by some school-based SLPs.³ In a 2024 ASHA survey, school-based SLPs ranked salary-related issues in their top three financial retention initiatives that employers could offer to help retain SLPs.⁴ The designation of Medical Assistance Program or Maryland Children’s Health Insurance Program reimbursement funds for additional positions, as well as for stipends, will help alleviate staff shortages so that those with communication and related disorders receive the care they need. For these funds to have the greatest impact, ASHA believes it is crucial for the implementing agencies to ensure funds are directed to communication sciences and disorders providers, and their interns/students, who are billing for services.

Thank you for considering ASHA's comments on HB 689. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Eileen Crowe, ASHA's director of state association relations, at ecrowe@asha.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. B. Mayfield-Clarke".

A. B. Mayfield-Clarke, PhD, CCC-SLP
2025 ASHA President

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2023). *Maryland* [Quick Facts].
<https://www.asha.org/siteassets/advocacy/state-fliers/maryland-state-flyer.pdf>

² Ibid.

³ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). *Recruiting and Retaining Qualified School-Based SLPs*.
<https://www.asha.org/careers/recruitment/schools/>

⁴ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2024). *2024 Schools Survey: SLP Workforce and Work Conditions*. <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/surveys/2024-schools-survey-slp-workforce.pdf>