

February 26, 2023

Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Senator Simonaire,

My name is Jeremy Caruso. I live in Severna Park (Oakham Court in district 31) and both myself and my wife are teachers in AACPS. We are writing **in support for SB791/HB 833** which would provide salary supplements to speech language pathologists in Maryland public schools with advanced credentials (SLP-CCC).

Our daughter, Camden, just qualified for speech services through an IEP. We are lucky that Camden can get direct services with a speech language pathologist (SLP-CCC) through AACPS. Our family and her teachers are already seeing the difference and we count ourselves lucky. In the state of Maryland SLPs are the third largest vacancy and the AACPS department that services children ages 3-5 years old has had/continues to have 3 slp vacancies. We are in support of this bill to help retain and recruit SLP-CCCs to the school system.

In AACPS, due to the high number of vacancies, the county has budgeted for SLP contractor and virtual SLPs. Can you imagine a 4 year-old practicing speech sounds in front of a computer? Think about the money that would be saved if instead of paying the contract companies (at least \$40,000 a hire) and/or an adult to sit in the room during the virtual speech sessions we could give the \$10,000 supplement to our direct hire SLP-CCC. This would make Maryland school, especially AACPS, a more desirable place to work.

Please ensure our children with disabilities, such as my daughter, have the same experience and access to the high-quality speech therapy services they deserve. **Please vote in favor of SB 791/HB833**

Thank you for your attention

Jeremy and Emily Caruso

February 27, 2023

Senator Brian Feldman, Chairman
Education, Energy, & Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

Senator Guy Guzzone, Chairman
Senate Budget Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary, Chair
House Ways & Means Committee
131 House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

From: Ms. Rachael Caruso
1311 Webster Street
Baltimore, MD 21230

Re: SUPPORT SB 791 / HB 883 – Public School – Job Duties and Salaries

Dear Chairman Feldman, Chairman Guzzone and Chair Atterbeary:

My name is Rachael Caruso. I am a speech language pathologist (SLP) in Anne Arundel County Schools (AACPS) and live in Baltimore City. I have been working in the field since 2010 and obtained my Certificate of Clinical Competence (SLP-CCC) in 2011. I currently work with 3-to-5 year olds through Community Based Services and provide services in preschools, homes, and daycares in the Glen Burnie, Pasadena, and North Anne Arundel County areas.

I am writing in favor of Senate Bill 791/HB 833.

The demand for speech-language pathologists is rising in both educational and medical settings. The projected job growth is at 21% through 2031 per the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. In 2018, more than half (54%) of ASHA Schools Survey respondents reported that job openings for speech language pathologists exceeded job seekers in their employment facility and geographical area.

A recent email from our AACPS SLP manager stressed how our field is operating under a critical shortage. For me, this means higher caseloads and having to work with larger groups (sometimes four-to-five, 3-to-4 year olds) during one, 30-minute session. It also means less time coaching daycare teachers and families, which impacts carryover of skills around the home and community. My colleagues and I are getting burnt out; some are even leaving the profession altogether or going to hospital/rehab settings for higher pay.

SLPs provide direct, specialized instruction to students with disabilities and are solely responsible and accountable for their Individualized Education Program (IEP) communication goals. We are the only professionals to target areas such as articulation, stuttering, and expressive/receptive languages on IEPs.

Our national certification (SLP-CCC) is an advanced credential and just as/perhaps more rigorous as the National Board Teaching Certification. We need a master's degree, pass a national examination, complete a Clinical Fellowship Year that requires us to be evaluated at different periods across 21 skills, and then need to complete 30 professional development hours every three years. A National Board Teaching Certification only requires a national test, three years of teaching, portfolio review, and Complete Maintenance of Certification every 5 years

The salary supplement will help retain and recruit highly qualified SLP-CCC to Maryland Public Schools. Over 20 states/jurisdictions in the U.S.A already offer some type of salary supplement for SLP-CCC. Due to the staffing shortages, school systems across Maryland are hiring contractors and paying at least \$40,000 to contract companies instead of investing in direct hires. Contract companies are costing school districts across Maryland from Western Maryland, Baltimore City/County, Anne Arundel County, and the Eastern Shore hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars. While the salary supplement for SLP-CCC will be expensive, it is not as expensive as the money going to these out-of-state contract companies. In addition, as SLP-CCC, we can bill Medicaid for our services and assessments. In turn, this brings money into our local school systems to also help offset the cost of the salary supplement.

Maryland must include speech language pathologists in the salary supplement framework. Our SLP-CCC is an advanced credential that is as rigorous as the NBCT. By granting SLP-CCC the salary supplement, we can reduce the fiscal note in these bills by eliminating the high cost (millions of dollars) local school jurisdictions are paying for contractual services. SLP-CCC provides direct services, and in many instances, brings in Federal revenue through Medicaid Billing. The children of Maryland deserve highly qualified SLP-CCC and fully staffed school districts to meet their communication needs.

Thank you very much for your assistance with this important matter.

Respectfully yours,

Rachael Caruso MS CCC-SLP

Rcaruso114@gmail.com

410-491-0229

Gloria Jeanne Petit-Clair
434 Peach Court
Annapolis, MD 21409
February 26, 2023
SB0791/HB0883

Senator Guy Guzzone
Chairperson, Senate Budget and Taxation
3 West Miller Senate Office
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21041

Senator Guzzone,

I support passage of SB791/HB833 which is part of an effort to provide increased funding for speech-language pathologists as part of the Blueprint for Education. I'm a Speech-Language Pathologist and a member of Maryland Speech-Language Hearing Association.

I am now retired after a 50-year career, practicing in public schools, health-care facilities, and university training. I advocated for speech-language pathologists and the consumers of our services through my positions on the Health Department's Licensure Board, the MSDE Speech-Language Pathology Board, as President of MSHA, Director of Public Policy and as a member of ASHA's Advisory Council.

I have followed and supported the growth of our profession since 1967. I am troubled by the status of SLPs in the public-school setting and its impact on the parents and students who must, by law, receive free, appropriate, and accessible services.

I have never seen my colleagues stretched this thin in their ability to deliver services, because of an increasing need for mandated services and a declining pool of available professionals. This shortfall is being felt across the state of Maryland. The Pandemic certainly contributed to the need for services, but the shortage started long before that.

SLPs who entered their career in the years 1970-1995 are eligible for retirement. Who will replace them? MD is home to 4 university training programs and only a small percentage of those graduates stay in MD. The cost of living is high and SLPs are looking for a better return on their education investment. Every LEA is recruiting SLPs. To provide mandated services, LEAs are rotating support SLPs into the buildings. But that can only go so far to meet the need.

LEAs are contracting with Rehab Agencies to provide services, even using Telehealth. In addition to the costs associated with contracting companies, the LEA must absorb the cost of hiring a TA to escort the child from the classroom and back, set up the video link and assist the child during the session. That is neither cost effective nor productive.

SLPs are the only service providers that can bill Medicaid for Medicaid for eligible students. Yes, the SLPs generate income for the LEA. When an SLP is missing, it's a huge loss to the students, but also a financial loss for the schools.

Before 2000, LEAs were able to provide short term coverage for vacant positions caused by leaves of absence or unexpected relocations. Arrangements could be made for short-term coverage. In 2005, Anne Arundel Co. created the position of a "floater", now called a "Interim Service Provider." I was that "floater" and provided the needed services in a particular school for a few months. Then I'd move on to the next position.

A few years later, the needs for coverage grew and within a few years, there was a team of 5 SLPs called, "Interim Service Providers" to cover all the vacant spots.

But now the needs for SLPs are out of control. Retirements are increasing, children are missing mandated sessions and the costs for contractual services are escalating. Something must be done to not only enable LEAs to recruit and retain SLPS, but to provide continuing support to SLPs in their clinical journey.

I believe that SB 07091/ HB 883 is a step in the right direction. It recognizes our national certification through the ASHA as the highest standard in the profession. The CCCs require a master's degree, successful passage of the national Praxis Exam, and completion of a supervised Clinical Fellowship.

Thank you for your time and attention. I ask for a favorable report for SB791/HB833

Gloria Jeanne Petit-Clair, M. ED

Speech-Language Pathologist, ASHA 36020

MD. License 00259

Anne Arundel County-Retired

434 Peach Court

Annapolis, MD 21409

February 28, 2023

Chairwoman Atterbeary, Chairman Feldman, and Chairman Guzzone,

I am a Speech-Language Pathologist in Anne Arundel County Public Schools and a resident of Annapolis, Maryland. I am writing to you in support of Senate Bill 791/HB 883 which would provide salary supplements to Speech-Language Pathologists in Maryland public schools with advanced credentials like those offered to my teacher colleagues through the Blueprint legislation.

Speech-Language Pathologists provide direct, specialized instruction to students with disabilities and are solely responsible and accountable for their Individualized Education Program (IEP) communication goals. Our advanced national certification – the American Speech Language Hearing Association Certificate of Clinical Competence (ASHA CCC-SLP) – requires that we hold a Master’s degree in speech pathology, complete a clinical fellowship, pass a standardized national exam, and rate highly through a peer review of our practice (Clinical Fellowship Year). I completed my Clinical Fellowship year with Anne Arundel County Public Schools. I completed the Clinical Fellowship Skills Inventory. The Clinical Fellowship Skills Inventory occurs over the CF year – 21 skills rated based on 18 hours of direct observation of our practice and 18 hours of indirect review of written products, etc. I believe that the ASHA CCC-SLP is at least as rigorous as the National Board Teaching Certification. I am attaching a document which compares the requirements for CCC and for NBT.

Speech-language pathology is the 3rd biggest staff shortage area in Maryland schools according to the Maryland State Department of Education. Salary supplements will help recruit, hire, and retain highly-qualified speech language pathologists to meet the needs of Maryland children. Currently, districts are using contractors, virtual services, providing compensatory FAPE awards, or paying for private special education schools which cost millions of dollars more than adequately staffing our schools with direct hire speech language pathologists. At least 21 states and hundreds of local jurisdictions offer salary supplements to Speech-language pathologists who hold the national CCC-SLP credential for this very purpose. Of note, Speech-Language Pathologists with the CCC are able to bill Medicaid for services and assessments. This brings in money to each school district.

Please vote in favor of SB 791/HB833 and consider an amendment on Page 3 line, 8, after the semicolon, insert: (II) A CERTIFICATE OF CLINICAL COMPETENCY (CCC-SLP) AWARDED BY THE AMERICAN SPEECH-LANGUAGE HEARING ASSOCIATION (ASHA)”. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Megan Reiter, M.A., CCC-SLP

805 Tyler Ave.

Annapolis, MD 21403

February 27, 2023

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Chairman Feldman, Chairman Guzzone, and Senator Simonaire:

I am a speech-language pathologist in Anne Arundel County Public School's Community Based Services and a resident of Severna Park, Maryland. I am writing to you in support of Senate Bill 791/HB 883 which would provide salary supplements to speech language pathologists in Maryland public schools with advanced credentials like those offered to my teacher colleagues through the Blueprint legislation.

I am currently working in a department with many open positions. My caseload is high and the students keep coming. I am expected to cover more kids in order to make sure they receive their services as written on their IEP. I can see the effect first hand on students when there are shortages. Groups are larger and the students get less individualized attention to help them meet their goals. I can't build relationships with families and their teachers in a way that will help them improve their skills when I have too high of a caseload. We need to find ways to attract and retain speech language pathologists so that all can receive quality services. I believe adding this supplement is a step in the right direction. Here are some other reasons to consider this.

- Speech-language pathologists provide direct, specialized instruction to students with disabilities and are solely responsible and accountable for their Individualized Education Program communication goals.
- Our advanced national certification – the American Speech Language Hearing Association Certificate of Clinical Competence (ASHA CCC-SLP) – requires that we hold a Master's degree in speech pathology, complete a clinical fellowship, pass a standardized national exam, and rate highly through a peer review of our practice (Clinical Fellowship Year)
- Clinical Fellowship Skills Inventory occurs over the CF year – 21 skills rated based on 18 hours of direct observation of our practice and 18 hours of indirect review of written products, etc
- The ASHA CCC-SLP is at least as rigorous as National Board Teaching Certification.
- Speech-language pathology is the 3rd biggest staff shortage area in Maryland schools according to the Maryland State Department of Education.
- Salary supplements will help recruit, hire, and retain highly-qualified speech language pathologists to meet the needs of Maryland children.
- Currently, districts are using contractors, virtual services, providing compensatory FAPE awards, or paying for private special education schools which cost millions of dollars more than adequately staffing our schools with direct hire speech language pathologists.
- At least 21 states and hundreds of local jurisdictions offer salary supplements to speech-language pathologists who hold the national CCC-SLP credential for this very purpose.

· SLP-CCC bill Medicaid for services and assessments. This brings in money to each school district.

I am asking you to please vote in favor of SB 791/HB833 and consider an amendment on Page 3 line, 8, after the semicolon, insert: (II) A CERTIFICATE OF CLINICAL COMPETENCY (CCC-SLP) AWARDED BY THE AMERICAN SPEECH-LANGUAGE HEARING ASSOCIATION (ASHA)”

Thank you for your consideration,

Kara Wilkinson