



February 22, 2026

Bill: HB901-Education - Public School Students - Recognition of External Diagnosis of Autism

Position: Oppose

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Speech Language Hearing Association represents speech language pathologists and audiologists across Maryland. Collectively, we elevate and engage members to strive for excellence in serving those impacted by communication and related disorders through advocacy, equity, education, interprofessional collaboration, and leadership development.

We are writing in **opposition of HB 901** which would require public schools to recognize a student's diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder from external professionals instead of following the current IDEA federal law. ¹

Public schools in Maryland follow The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which ensures free appropriate public education tailored to individual needs. ¹ According to IDEA, the evaluation completed by the school team must be comprehensive. This means it must document the disability as well as an adverse educational impact. ² Sources to document adverse academic impact include not only formal assessments by an educational or related service professional but also observations at school, language samples, work samples, curriculum assessments, teacher checklist/reports, and/or school, district, or statewide assessments. For a public school team to accept an external (i.e. non-school based) diagnosis and then provide support based on an external report until a school based evaluation is completed would be a violation of IDEA.

It is the parents' right to request a meeting with the IEP team to request testing and share outside reports from medical professionals. The parents are then part of the IEP team to review the referral, data, and any exclusionary criteria ³ to determine if a disability is suspected and if the disability has an adverse academic impact. It is at this initial meeting when the school IEP team determines to accept the outside report. This could mean additional testing by the public school IEP team is not required. If the IEP team determines testing is warranted then there is a mandated timeline for the IEP team to complete the evaluation.

Maryland Speech-Language-Hearing Association
140B Purcellville Gateway Drive, Suite 120
Purcellville, VA 20132
301-304-7001
info@mdslha.org

Educators and related services providers such as SLPs and Audiologists in the schools are all looking out for our students' best interest, but following external professionals' recommendations and suggested supports without documented adverse educational impact conflicts with current IDEA law. MSHA is in **opposition of HB 901 as written.**

If this bill were to move forward, the chair, vice chair, and committee should consider revising line under FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS SUBSECTION, A MEDICAL, MENTAL HEALTH, OR EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONAL INCLUDES:

(V) A LICENSED SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST ~~WORKING AS PART OF A MULTIDISCIPLINARY DIAGNOSTIC TEAM~~; . While speech language pathologists can work as part of a multidisciplinary diagnostic team, when trained, SLPs are qualified professionals to diagnose ASD using formal assessments.⁴

Thank you for your consideration



Rachael Caruso MS CCC-SLP

Karen Miranda MS CCC-SLP

MSHA Director of Advocacy and Public Policy

MSHA President

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1. U.S. Department of Education. (2025, August 6). *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*.
<https://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/individuals-disabilities/idea>
 2. Neal, A. (2022). School-based SLPs: Are Our Caseloads Really That High. *SpeechPathology.com*. Article 20581. Available at
www.speechpathology.com
 3. U.S. Department of Education. (2017, May 2). *Section 300.306: Determination of eligibility*.
<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/d/300.306>
 4. Pearson Education. (n.d.). *Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule, Second Edition (ADOS-2): Frequently asked questions*.
<https://www.pearsonclinical.co.uk/content/dam/school/global/clinical/uk-clinical/files/ados2-faq.pdf>

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