

April 1, 2025

The Honorable Paul W. Lee
Chair, House Health Committee
11 South Union Street
Montgomery, AL 36130

RE: HB 441

Dear Chairman Lee:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), I write to oppose House Bill 441, which reduces the education requirement for those assisting in the practice of speech-language pathology (e.g., speech-language pathology assistants) from a bachelor's degree to an associate's degree in communication disorders or a related field in speech-language pathology. In addition to ASHA, both the Alabama Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology and the Speech and Hearing Association of Alabama oppose reducing education requirements for these practitioners.

ASHA is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 241,000 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 2,800 ASHA members reside in Alabama.¹

ASHA believes maintaining Alabama's existing standards is critical to ensure that speech-language pathology assistants—whose clients may have a variety of communication disorders, such as stuttering, autism, aphasia, dyslexia, and apraxia—receive the appropriate level of education and training. These standards exist in 24 other states that require a bachelor's degree, or equivalent, for support personnel working outside of school settings and 21 states that require this same educational standard for those working in school settings.²

Currently, the Alabama Administrative Code requires those assisting in speech-language pathology (e.g., speech-language pathology assistants) to 1) possess a bachelor's degree or equivalent in communication disorders or a related field in speech-language pathology and 2) be registered with the licensing board. Before registration is granted, the Board considers both the academic training and the clinical experience of all applicants, along with the duties and responsibilities assigned to them and the amount and nature of supervision under a licensed SLP. The supervisor must also submit a work plan for the speech-language pathology assistant. To maintain their registration, assistants must complete a minimum of 10 continuing education hours each year in activities related to their scope.

A bachelor's degree in communicative disorders through the University of Alabama requires 120 semester hours. There is not an associate's degree program for speech-language

pathology assistants in Alabama. If there were, such a program would require fewer hours than the bachelor's degree requirements that are already in place.

Thank you for considering ASHA's opposition to House Bill 441 and to maintain the current education requirements for those assisting in the practice of speech-language pathology. 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). *Alabama* [Quick Facts]. <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/advocacy/state-fliers/alabama-state-flyer.pdf>

² American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). *Scope of Practice for the Speech-Language Pathology Assistant (SLPA)*. <https://www.asha.org/policy/slpa-scope-of-practice/>