



February 1, 2024

The Honorable Dan Johnson
Utah Houses of Representatives
526 W. 600 S.
Logan, UT 84321

RE: HB 103

Dear Representative Johnson:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write to express support for HB 103, which adds audiologists and speech-language pathologists who meet set higher education standards to the teacher salary supplement program.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 228,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists (SLPs); speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology assistants; and students. Over 3,400 ASHA members reside in Utah.¹

Educational audiologists and school-based SLPs often face high caseloads and high volumes of paperwork while working with a range of students that may be facing complex communication disorders or may be considered medically fragile.² Additionally, these practitioners may have to take on duties outside of their normal scope because of personnel shortages in schools.³ Due to the daily challenges educational audiologists and school-based SLPs face, schools may have difficulty with recruitment and retention.

SLPs are uniquely educated and trained to assess and treat speech, language, swallowing, and cognitive communication disorders in children and adults. These services help children acquire language and enable people to recover essential skills to communicate about their health and safety, to swallow adequate nutrition safely, and to have sufficient attention, memory, and organizational skills to function in their environment. Audiologists are trained professionals who diagnose, manage, and treat hearing and balance disorders. Educational audiologists provide a wide variety of services to children in school settings while collaborating with fellow multidisciplinary team members to effectively facilitate student listening, learning, and communication access.

Making audiologists and SLPs a part of the teacher salary supplement program helps to ensure enhanced recruitment and retention of highly qualified professionals who serve those most in need in the Utah schools.

Thank you for considering ASHA's support for HB 103. 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 black ink, appearing to read "Tena L. McNamara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tena" being more prominent and the last name "McNamara" written in a smaller, more compact script.

Tena L. McNamara, AuD, CCC-A/SLP
2024 ASHA President

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2022). Utah [Quick Facts].

<https://www.asha.org/siteassets/advocacy/state-fliers/utah-state-flyer.pdf>.

² American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2022). 2022 School Survey: SLP Caseload and Workload Characteristics. <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/surveys/2022-schools-survey-slp-caseload.pdf>.

³ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2022). 2022 School Survey: SLP Workforce and Work Conditions. <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/surveys/2022-schools-survey-slp-workforce.pdf>.