



AMERICAN
SPEECH-LANGUAGE-
HEARING
ASSOCIATION

March 2, 2015

Senator Andy Hill
Chair, Ways and Means Committee
303 John A. Cherberg Building
PO Box 40445
Olympia, WA 98504

RE: S.B. 5317

Dear Senator Hill:

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 182,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists (SLPs); speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Over 3,100 of our members reside in Washington.

On behalf of our members, I am writing with comments on the proposed legislation related to requiring screening for autism and developmental delays for children in medical assistance programs. We believe that audiology and speech-language pathology services should be specifically included in the definition of medical assistance. Also, we recommend amending the definition of medical assistance in Section 2, RCW 74.09.520 and 2011 1st sp.s.c.15 s 27 (1) (n) to include habilitative services and “devices” (hearing aids and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices) in this section.

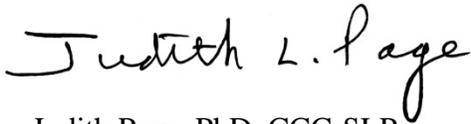
We believe audiologists and SLPs should be included in any comprehensive assessment for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and developmental delays, as audiologists and SLPs are able to prioritize intervention objectives and coordinate planning for communicative success. SLPs are highly skilled autonomous professionals who work independently in all practice settings. While applied behavior analysis (ABA) therapists may work on an individual’s behaviors, an SLP focuses on understanding and use of language, social communication, literacy, speech production, and AAC. We believe that individuals with ASD must be provided with the full complement of services to meet their individual needs.

Utilizing a team of qualified professionals including physicians, mental health professionals, behavioral therapists, SLPs, audiologists, and others will ensure that the individual diagnosed with ASD or developmental delays will have a comprehensive assessment to determine how to best meet his/her unique needs. Allowing individuals without the appropriate education and training to make assessment decisions about communication needs of individuals with ASD or developmental delays may result in an inaccurate assessment and inappropriate recommendations for services to the family. SLPs are professionals who are highly skilled and

uniquely qualified to assess and treat communication disorders related to ASD and developmental delays.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. Should you have any questions, please contact Eileen Crowe, ASHA's director, state association relations, at ecrowe@asha.org, or Janet Deppe, ASHA's director of state advocacy, at jdeppe@asha.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judith L. Page". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "J" and "P".

Judith Page, PhD, CCC-SLP
2015 ASHA President