



ASHA
American
Speech-Language-Hearing
Association

March 12, 2019

The Honorable Tyler Diep
Capitol Office, Room 5126
P.O. Box 94849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0072

RE: Assembly Bill 1271

Dear Assembly Member Diep:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write to express strong support for the maintenance of a licensing exam for audiologists and speech-language pathologists (SLPs) in California which is being studied under AB 1271.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 204,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; SLPs; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Audiologists specialize in preventing and assessing hearing and balance disorders as well as providing audiologic treatment, including hearing aids. Speech-language pathologists identify, assess, and treat speech and language problems, including swallowing disorders. Over 14,000 ASHA members reside in California.

Currently, California Statutes Article 3, Section 2532.2 (d) (1) requires audiologists and SLPs seeking a license to pass an examination or examinations approved by the Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology & Hearing Aid Dispensers Board. The Board determines the subject matter and scope of the examinations and may waive the examination upon evidence that the applicant has successfully completed an examination approved by the Board. Written examinations may be supplemented by oral examinations as the Board shall determine. This exam is needed as one of the measures of competence for audiologists and SLPs. **ASHA urges you to continue to require licensure examinations for both audiologists and SLPs.**

Background on Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology

Audiology Professional Qualifications

Audiologists earn a clinical doctoral degree and are highly qualified to conduct comprehensive assessments for hearing loss, auditory function, balance and related systems, and evaluate, select, and dispense hearing aids. Audiologists also assess the candidacy of individuals with hearing loss for cochlear implants

and work with medical teams to provide fitting, mapping, and audiologic rehabilitation to optimize the use of these devices.

Speech-Language Pathology Professional Qualifications

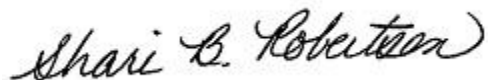
SLPs are highly skilled professionals who, at minimum, hold a master's degree in communication disorders from an accredited program recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. SLPs complete a challenging education and training program, a supervised clinical fellowship, and must pass a nationally standardized examination. SLPs assess and treat a variety of communication disorders involving speech, language, fluency (e.g., stuttering), voice and resonance problems, cognitive communication disorders such as memory, attention and problem-solving disorders, and swallowing and associated feeding disorders. SLPs provide services in a variety of practice settings ranging from schools to institutions such as hospitals and rehabilitation centers, early intervention programs, and private practice.

Autonomous Practice

Audiologists and SLPs are autonomous professionals who work directly with clients, patients, and students making independent judgments regarding the assessment and treatment of an individual's communication disorder. Graduate education provides audiologists and SLPs with the knowledge, skills, and competencies to practice independently. The independent practice of the professions is fully supported and regulated by state licensing entities in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. All licensing boards recognize and value the autonomous practice of audiologists and SLPs.

We appreciate your consideration of our position on AB 1271, and the importance of maintaining a licensure exam. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Eileen Crowe, ASHA's director of state association relations, at ecrowe@asha.org.

Sincerely,



Shari B. Robertson, PhD, CCC-SLP
2019 ASHA President