



ASHA
American
Speech-Language-Hearing
Association

March 22, 2019

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS and Education
Appropriations
United States Senate
136 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS and Education
Appropriations
United States Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Senator Murray:

As the Subcommittee prepares to mark up the fiscal year (FY) 2020 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill, I write on behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association to urge you to fund the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) initiative at its full authorization level of \$11.3M to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and \$18.6M to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 204,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students.

Nearly 33 children are born every day with a hearing disorder, making it the most common congenital condition in the United States.¹ Failure to fund this initiative at its full authorization level may leave thousands of children with undiagnosed hearing loss. It would also deprive children of early intervention services that improve language skills and development.

EHDI is one of the nation's most important public health programs, offering early hearing screening and interventions to all newborns, infants, and young children in every state. When the Child Health Act of 2000—which established the state-based universal newborn hearing screening programs—was passed, only 40% of newborns were being screened. Yet with today's programs, approximately 98% of newborns receive an audiologic screening totaling 4 million infants and children in the year 2016 alone.²

Thank you for your efforts on this important area in children's health. ASHA looks forward to working with you on this issue and others that are vital to our nation's children. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Erik Lazdins, ASHA's associate director of federal affairs, at elazdins@asha.org.

Sincerely,

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

cc: The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Vice Chairman, Committee on Appropriations

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2010). *Identifying infants with hearing loss - United States, 1999-2007*. *MMWR Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Rep.* 59(8): 220-223. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5908a2.htm>.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2018). *Summary of 2016 National CDC EHDI Data*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/hearingloss/2016-data/01-2016-HSFS-Data-Summary-h.pdf>.