



Rhode Island Speech-Language-Hearing Association

March 11, 2025

Chair, House Corporations Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H5557 (Speech-Language Pathology Assistant bill)

Dear Chairperson Solomon and Members of the House Corporations Committee:

On behalf of the Rhode Island Speech-Language-Hearing Association (RISHA), I write to express support for updating the requirements for Speech-Language Pathology Assistants (SLPAs) so that SLPAs can be actively licensed to work in Rhode Island. **Existing state requirements for SLPA education and preparation effectively prohibit their practice.** For example, the current regulations for SLPAs require at least 18 hours of graduate credit, which is not consistent with training guidelines from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), nor does it coincide with SLPA educational programs and regulations across the country and next door in both CT and MA.

RISHA's mission is to support the professions of speech-language pathology and audiology in the state of Rhode Island through advocacy, public awareness, and professional development on behalf of its members and the individuals they serve. RISHA is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for individuals with communication and related disorders by providing continuing education, advocacy and professional support for Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) and audiologists in Rhode Island. Our members work in schools, medical facilities, rehabilitation centers, early intervention programs, private practice, universities, and other agencies, serving people of all ages who have communication disorders.

Given the shortage of SLPs across the state, SLPAs are needed more than ever. Assistants can significantly enhance the delivery of speech-language services by enabling SLPs to extend their reach and manage their workload more efficiently and effectively. By handling clerical tasks and implementing therapy plans under supervision, SLPAs can allow SLPs more time to work with patients/clients who have more complex needs.

To ensure the highest standard of care, the systematic licensing of SLPAs in Rhode Island is imperative, just as Occupational Therapy Assistants and Physical Therapist Assistants are licensed today. Licensing establishes a consistent standard of competence that all SLPAs must meet before they can practice. This ensures that they have the necessary training and skills to provide effective support to SLPs and safe interventions for clients. Clear licensure requirements define the scope of practice for SLPAs, distinguishing their responsibilities from those of licensed SLPs. This reduces liability issues and ensures that SLPAs are utilized appropriately within their competency level. By maintaining licensing for SLPAs, we can ensure the integrity of the profession, improve patient outcomes, and maintain public trust in speech-language pathology services.

If you or your staff have any questions or want to discuss this matter further, please contact me at allanbshawslp@gmail.com

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Allan B. Shaw', enclosed within a large, loopy oval shape.

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