

April 23, 2025

Dear Sir or Madam:

My name is Giavanna Galati, and I am the current president of the University of Rhode Island Speech Language Hearing Association (URISLHA), a campus organization for all Communicative Disorders majors who are aspiring Speech Language Pathologists and Audiologists. On the behalf of URISLHA, **I would like to give my full and unwavering support to the passage of RI House Bill 5557.**

As a future Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) surrounded by other like-minded individuals, I urge you to consider our unique perspective on how this bill will affect future clinicians. This bill is more than just policy to us—it **represents opportunity, access, and a future that aligns with the growing needs of our field.** Many of our peers aspire to become Speech-Language Pathology Assistants (SLPAs), but right now in Rhode Island, those pathways are unclear or simply unavailable, creating an unnecessary roadblock for passionate and qualified individuals eager to serve their communities.

Reforming the SLPA registration pathway in Rhode Island would open critical doors, not only for students, but for the populations we hope to serve. First, it would **expand the workforce and job opportunities** in our field, specifically in the healthcare and education sectors. Next, passage of this bill could also encourage universities to develop SLPA preparation programs. Additionally, overwhelming caseloads can be challenging for SLPs. **Having an SLPA to work alongside would be extremely beneficial for the SLP**, who would be able to focus on complex cases and evaluations while the SLPA assists with screenings and provides support in therapy sessions, thus improving efficiency of care delivery.

**Having SLPAs in the workforce will also benefit individuals with communication disorders by alleviating currently long waitlists and limited individualized care, especially in Early Intervention and school settings.**

Our education at URI has taught us how crucial early intervention is for children and families, and having SLPAs available to provide timely support ensures that no child falls through the cracks during this critical window for development. We have also learned in school about the National Standards for our career. RI should follow suit along with most states to recognize SLPAs as valuable members of the Speech-Language Pathology field to ensure we are using best practices to allow individuals to receive the high-quality services that they need.

As future clinicians our hope is to create and be part of a better prepared workforce. Every student in our program comes in with a goal to help people. **Passing this bill will make tremendous strides in not just availability of care, but the quality of services provided to make a meaningful impact on the individuals with whom we work.**

As a student leader in the Communicative Disorders undergraduate and graduate program at URI, I thank you for considering this testimony. **Please help us make this vision a reality**—not just for us as future clinicians, but for the countless individuals in our communities who need and deserve better access to speech and language services.

Sincerely,

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