



AMERICAN  
SPEECH-LANGUAGE-  
HEARING  
ASSOCIATION

March 19, 2015

Representative Andrew Fleischmann, Co-Chair  
Senator Gayle Slossberg, Co-Chair  
Education Committee  
Connecticut General Assembly  
Legislative Office Building, Room 3100  
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: H.B. 7023

Dear Chairman Fleischmann, Chairwoman Slossberg, and Members of the Education Committee:

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; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Over 2,400 of our members reside in Connecticut.

On behalf of our members, I am in writing to oppose changes in H.B. 7023 for audiometric screenings for school-aged children. H.B. 7023 would reduce the number of audiometric screenings in schools from kindergarten, first, second, third, fifth, and eighth grade to kindergarten, first, third, fourth, and fifth grade. We urge the Committee to not reduce the number of required audiometric screenings, but instead increase that number in order to ensure that all children are receiving periodic audiometric screenings.

Studies have linked untreated hearing loss to many social and economic factors, including: depression; withdrawal from social situations; reduced alertness and increased risk to personal safety; impaired memory and ability to learn new tasks; reduced job performance and earning power; and diminished psychological and overall health. Approximately 15% of school-age children have some degree of hearing loss in one or both ears, with 5.4% (or about 1 in 20) having less severe or unilateral hearing loss. Academic achievement and social functioning are significantly impacted by even a mild to moderate hearing loss, which can bring difficulty learning and building the important interpersonal skills necessary to foster self-esteem and success in school and life. In fact, over one-third of children with less severe or unilateral hearing loss are projected to fail at least one grade and/or will require additional educational support, which is estimated to cost the educational system over \$5.5 billion. Available data supports the academic, social, and financial impact of hearing loss at all levels.

### **Academic Achievement**

- Children with hearing loss have difficulty with all areas of academic achievement, especially reading and mathematical concepts.
- Children with mild to moderate hearing loss, on average, achieve one to four grade levels lower than their peers with normal hearing, unless appropriate management occurs.

- Children with severe to profound hearing loss usually achieve skills no higher than the third- or fourth-grade level, unless appropriate educational intervention occurs early.
- The gap in academic achievement between children with normal hearing and those with hearing loss usually widens as they progress through school.
- The level of achievement is related to parental involvement and the quantity, quality, and timing of the support services children receive.

### **Social Functioning**

- Children with severe to profound hearing loss often report feeling isolated, without friends, and unhappy in school, particularly when their socialization with other children with hearing loss is limited.
- These social problems appear to be more frequent in children with a mild or moderate hearing loss than in those with a severe to profound loss.

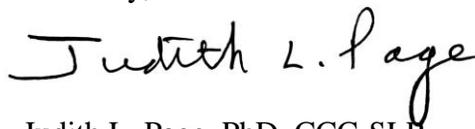
### **Financial Impact**

Research by the National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management (NCHAM), has shown that ... “by the time a child with a hearing loss graduates from high school, more than \$400,000 per child could be saved in special education costs if the child is identified early and given appropriate educational, medical, and audiological services,” including hearing aids. Visit NCHAM’s website for additional information at [www.infanthearing.org/](http://www.infanthearing.org/).

As illustrated in an article in the Journal of the American Medical Association, "Change in Prevalence of Hearing Loss in U.S. Adolescents" (*JAMA*, Aug. 18, 2010), overall teen hearing loss has jumped 31% from 1988-1994 to 2005-2006. The study showed 1 in 5 adolescents who were 12 to 19 years old—approximately 6.5 million teens—had hearing loss in 2005-2006. The prevalence of high frequency hearing loss was significantly higher than low-frequency hearing loss. Teen hearing loss is increasing at an epidemic rate, indicating a need for continued hearing screenings through middle and high school.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. Should you have any questions, please contact Susan Adams, ASHA’s director of state legislative and regulatory advocacy, at [sadams@asha.org](mailto:sadams@asha.org), or Janet Deppe, ASHA’s director of state advocacy, at [jdeppe@asha.org](mailto:jdeppe@asha.org).

Sincerely,



Judith L. Page, PhD, CCC-SLP  
2015 ASHA President