



Michigan Speech-Language-Hearing Association
Assistance, Awareness & Advocacy in Communication Sciences & Disorders

On behalf of the Michigan Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I would like to offer my gratitude to the committee for including SB 811 in today's hearing. SB811 increases the time newly graduated speech-language pathologists have to complete their supervision requirements on their way to become a fully licensed, certified, and independent SLP. SB 811 was heard in the Senate Health Policy Committee in February 2022 and passed unanimously, and was subsequently passed unanimously by the full Senate on March 10, 2022.

I'd like to take a moment to introduce you to the field of speech-language pathology in case you're not familiar. The Michigan Speech-Language-Hearing Association represents speech-language pathologists across the state of Michigan. We work with individuals with communication and swallowing difficulties across the lifespan. You'll find SLPs working with infants in the NICU experiencing feeding difficulties. SLPs also work with elderly populations experiencing the effects of stroke, dementia, and swallowing concerns. We're everywhere in between – children with speech and language difficulties, individuals recovering from a traumatic brain injury, professionals with voice disorders, and individuals who stutter. If communication, feeding, or swallowing is a concern, an SLP is likely involved.

SLPs work in a variety of settings. We provide in-home services for the birth-3 population as well as those who are medically compromised. We work in outpatient clinics, providing access and support to individuals with functional communication and swallowing concerns. You'll also find us in healthcare facilities, including acute care, skilled nursing facilities, and outpatient rehabilitation facilities to improve communication and swallowing difficulties. SLPs in school settings work closely with teachers, administrators, and mental health professionals to support access to education and support the social-emotional well-being for students with articulation difficulties, language difficulties, stuttering, reading, and writing.

Due to a conflict between the SLP general rules and the language contained in PA 368, a change to the length of the SLP educational limited license was enacted in 2021. This license impacts new SLP graduates who are just starting out as professionals in the field and require supervision by a licensed SLP. It is the first step new graduates must take to obtain full licensure. The current 12-month non-renewable license is untenable for many SLPs. SB811 increases the length of time provided for completion of the requirements for full licensure and improves a new SLP's flexibility in fulfilling these requirements.

Michigan, along with other states across the nation, is experiencing a workforce shortage of SLPs across settings, particularly in healthcare and schools. In 2021, MSHA surveyed

current graduate students across the state regarding their plans to stay in Michigan after graduation. Among 215 graduate students at Michigan universities with SLP programs, 64% of them had plans to stay in Michigan, 26% were undecided, and only 10% planned to move out of state upon graduating with their degree. The majority of students, and future clinicians, want to work in the state, but they have concerns that the current 12-month license does not provide adequate time to accrue the required supervised hours. Our concern is that, due to the current time constraints with the educational limited license, new graduates in Michigan may leave the state, potentially never to return. We need more SLPs in the state, not fewer. Passage of SB811 is a critical step to getting more SLPs into the workforce in Michigan and getting skilled services to individuals in need.