



TO: The Senate Business, Labor & Technology Committee
FROM: The Arc of Colorado | Meredith Henry, Senior Policy Associate, mhenry@thearcofco.org
RE: **HB 25-1075, Regulate Speech-Language Pathology Assistants**
DATE: Thursday, March 27, 2025

Thank you to the Chair and members of the Senate Business, Labor, and Technology Committee for the opportunity to provide written testimony. My name is Meredith Henry, and I have the privilege of serving as the Senior Policy and Advocacy Associate at The Arc of Colorado. Our mission is to promote and protect the human rights of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), advocating for their full inclusion and participation in the community.

The Arc of Colorado strongly supports HB25-1075. Individuals with IDD in Colorado often face significant barriers to accessing the speech-language support they need. This bill represents an important step forward in expanding access by allowing Speech-Language Pathology Assistants (SLPAs) to practice in a wider range of settings. We are grateful to the bill sponsors, Senators Kirkmeyer, Mullica, and Michaelson Jenet, for their leadership on this crucial issue.

Access to speech-language therapy is crucial for individuals with IDD, as it provides a vital means of communication. No matter how minimal, being able to express oneself allows individuals to communicate their needs and engage meaningfully with others. Communication is a fundamental part of the human experience, and when individuals cannot communicate, it can severely impact their quality of life.

While many children with IDD currently benefit from support by SLPAs in schools, this bill extends those benefits to adults with IDD. For example, adults with IDD may experience challenges in speech production or have hearing impairments, leading to miscommunications, isolation, frustration, and anxiety. The ability to communicate effectively is critical to alleviating these challenges and enhancing overall well-being.

This bill is vital in increasing access to essential speech support for the IDD community in Colorado. We urge your support for HB25-1075.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Meredith Henry

Senate Business, Labor, & Technology

03/27/2025 Upon Adjournment

HB25-1075 Regulate Speech-Language Pathology Assistants

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
<p>Andrea Glen For themselves</p>	<p>Members of the Senate Business, labor, and technology committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today in support of HB 25-1075. My name is Andrea Glen. I am a speech language pathologist from Colorado Springs, and I am here to address the critical need for this legislation, which would allow Speech-Language Pathology Assistants (SLPAs) to practice legally outside of school settings and help address workforce shortages in our state.</p> <p>Currently, SLPAs in Colorado are restricted to working only in schools with a CDE license. This bill would enable them to work in a broader range of settings, aligning the practice of SLPAs with existing regulations from the Colorado Department of Education.</p> <p>In 2022, a question of utilizing SLPAs in home health arose. This uncertainty stemmed from various sources, including the Medicaid Speech Manual, which outlines how one bills as an SLPA in outside settings.</p> <p>In 2023, the Colorado Speech-Language Hearing Association submitted a Sunrise application seeking SLPA certification. While the application was ultimately denied, the committee recognized that conflicting information exists. Passing this bill would allow for clear roles, responsibilities, and</p>

	<p>appropriate use of SLPAs in many other settings, including private practices, hospitals, home health, and more.</p> <p>This bill opens up new workforce opportunities for SLPAs. There is a growing shortage of qualified speech therapists in Colorado, while the demand for speech and language therapy services is greatly increasing across all populations. Fortunately, Colorado is home to three universities offering accredited SLPA programs. By enabling SLPAs to work in a wider variety of settings outside of the school system, we can provide more people with access to the care they need.</p> <p>This bill also ensures that those providing and receiving services are protected. The legislation includes strict guidelines for supervision and scope of practice, meaning SLPAs will always work under the license of certified Speech-Language Pathologists. This protects the supervising SLP, the SLPA, the companies, and most importantly, the clients. Clients include vulnerable individuals, such as my brother with Down syndrome and my grandpa, who recently suffered a stroke, both of whom rely on speech therapy for critical needs like rehabilitative speech, augmentative communication, and swallowing.</p> <p>Currently, there is not a centralized system in Colorado for reporting incidents involving SLPAs. If a complaint arises, the supervising SLP would remain accountable, instead of the practicing SLPA. We want to ensure that high standards of care are maintained, as well as protection for our clinicians with this bill.</p> <p>By supporting HB 25-1075, we can create meaningful career pathways for SLPAs, increase access to vital</p>
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	<p>therapy services, and, most importantly, provide effective service to those who depend on speech-language therapy to improve their quality of life.</p> <p>I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our sponsors for their time and commitment to this bill.</p> <p>Senator Kirkmeyer and Senator Mullica, thank you.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and consideration</p>
<p>Jill Hawks Amend themselves</p>	<p>Dear Members of the Senate Business, Labor and Technology Committee, My name is Jill Hawks, and I am a speech-language pathologist (SLP), the owner of a pediatric private practice located in Denver, CO and I am the current President Elect for the Colorado Speech and Hearing Association (CSHA) for 2025. I have a particular interest in this bill as I have supervised a speech-language pathology assistant (SLPA) in schools and also had the great fortune to practice as an SLPA from 2006-2007. I understand firsthand the value of both SLPs and SLPAs. Before entering graduate school, I worked in the school district in Greeley, Colorado under 3 different SLPs. Upon receiving my Bachelor of Science in speech-language and hearing sciences, I felt I had a good foundational understanding of speech-language pathology. I had great supervisors during that time and felt comfortable in the school setting in which I had been trained as an SLPA.</p> <p>What I did not know is how much more I would learn in graduate school and the years beyond about what it means to "Hold paramount the welfare of the client," the first principle in our Code of Ethics. I learned the "why" behind the decisions SLPs make every moment to safely and ethically support their clientele. I learned why we must proceed with caution when we are addressing feeding and swallowing issues and working those who are medically fragile or unstable. Once I earned my Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology and became certified by the American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA), I better understood the gravity of my responsibility as a service provider.</p> <p>Due to the nature of being a service industry, we are tasked with far more than making speech-language and hearing decisions. We are also confidants, counselors, advocates, educators and a safe space for our clients. We keep up with current evidence-based practices,</p>

	<p>changes in laws related to healthcare, education and business practices. We build connections and form alliances. These roles and responsibilities, while chosen, are not always easy to bear at the end of the day. It is a privilege to support those courageous enough to ask.</p> <p>Expanding our workforce to legally include SLPAs ensures SLPs can continue to practice at the top of their license. Affording SLPAs the opportunity to share their skillset supports our workforce and clientele in all settings and helps SLPAs earn livable wages, which helps prevent burnout. I am extremely appreciative of Senator Kirkmeyer and Senator Mullica for their efforts in our shared mission to hold this profession to a high standard. Continuing to work toward certification of SLPAs with HB 1075 is the pathway to ensure consumers, SLPAs and SLPs alike are afforded protections for years to come. Thank you, Members of the Senate Business, Labor and Technology Committee, for hearing my testimony.</p>
<p>Amber Rea For themselves</p>	<p>HB 25-1075, Business, Labor & Technology Committee - March 27, 2025</p> <p>Madam Chair & Members of the Committee,</p> <p>My name is Amber Rea and I am a speech language pathologist and the clinic director of Straka Pediatric Therapies in Castle Rock. Our clinics have served the birth to age 21 population in Douglas and El Paso Counties for the last 40 years by providing speech/language therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, feeding therapy and mental health counseling services.</p> <p>I am here to urge the committee's support of House Bill 1075. This bill will allow Speech Language Pathology Assistants to be hired and work under the supervision of a speech language pathologist, in settings beyond the school setting in Colorado.</p> <p>Currently, Speech-Language Pathology Assistants (SLPAs) can only work in schools and are not permitted to work in private practices or other community-based settings. This restriction limits the ability of clinics and providers to expand services and meet the growing demand for speech therapy – In comparison, other therapies, such as</p>

	<p>Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy, have allowed assistants to work under supervision in various settings for years.</p> <p>I think everyone here today has a personal connection to someone receiving speech therapy in some form or fashion --from a child with Autism using a device to talk or an aging parent struggling with cognition and swallowing post stroke. Speech therapy covers such a wide range of services and frankly, we need support. There are just not enough SLPs in the state of Colorado that can meet the needs of these growing populations. The passing of this bill would ensure much needed access to care and alleviate ever-growing waitlists.</p> <p>So, with that in mind, please consider that niece or nephew with a lisp, the elderly neighbor battling memory issues or that college student with a stutter—these are the people that will benefit from your support of this bill.</p> <p>Thank you!</p> <p>Amber Rea, MA CCC-SLP 7324 Pyrite Court, Castle Rock CO 80108 Clinic Director Straka Pediatric Therapies Email: amber@strakatherapies.com Web: www.castlerockpediatrictherapies.com www.strakaspeech.com</p>
<p>Amy Fetter For herself</p>	<p>HB 25-1075, Business, Labor & Technology Committee - March 27, 2025</p> <p>Madam Chair, Members of the Committee,</p> <p>My name is Amy Fetter. I'm a speech-language pathologist, Board-Certified Behavior Analyst, and owner of Integrated Speech & Behavior, a private practice serving children with autism and rare genetic disorders who are non-speaking and technology to</p>

	<p>communicate. My practice serves Medicaid-funded families across Boulder, Denver, Arapahoe, and Douglas Counties.</p> <p>I strongly support House Bill 1075 and urge you to do the same. This bill is not just about addressing Colorado’s severe provider shortage in speech therapy—it is about clearing up the widespread confusion that has left practices like mine unable to hire the support we desperately need.</p> <p>Right now, clinics across the state are in limbo. Colorado Medicaid’s billing manual states that SLPAs can provide services under the direct supervision of a speech-language pathologist, yet there is no explicit allowance or prohibition in the law regarding SLPA ability to provide services outside of public schools. Last summer, I considered hiring an SLPA and I spent months contacting the Colorado Department of Healthcare Policy and Financing, Colorado Medicaid, and the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association to clarify whether I could hire an SLPA—only to encounter uncertainty at every turn. Despite my lengthy waitlists and unfilled therapist positions, I decided against hiring this provider.</p> <p>Meanwhile, some clinics in Colorado are confidently hiring SLPAs, while others—like mine—are too afraid to make that hire without certainty. This inconsistency is unacceptable. As a practice owner, I am committed to following the rules, yet I have never been able to hire enough speech therapists to meet the overwhelming demand in my community. Families sit on waitlists, while others receive services simply because different clinics interpret the gray area differently. This should not be a guessing game.</p> <p>This bill would fix that. It would establish clear, consistent guidelines so that every clinic in Colorado can operate under the same rules. It would allow trained, supervised SLPAs to step in where they are needed most—helping children like the ones I serve with complex communication needs. This bill will remove the unacceptable confusion therapy owners all over Colorado experience on this topic. Thank you very much and I urge you to support HB 1075.</p> <p>Amy Fetter Clinically Certified Speech Language Pathologist (CCC-SLP) Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)</p>
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	<p>Owner of Integrated Speech & Behavior www.integratedspeechbehavior.com Phone: (303) 596-9074 Fax: (720) 257-7088</p>
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March 26, 2025

Dear Members of the Senate Business, Labor and Technology Committee,

My name is Tiffany Barker and I am a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) representing the Colorado Speech-Language-Hearing Association (CSHA) in favor of House Bill 25-1075.

I believe certifying Speech-Language Pathology Assistants (SLPAs) would be of great benefit to many individuals, including patients and their families and other professionals such as SLPs within the State of Colorado. Passing this bill would not only provide regulatory protection to SLPAs who would practice outside of the school setting, but would also provide protection for their supervising SLP, their employers, and most importantly the patients they are serving.

It's very important to note that this would not be a new regulation. Currently, SLPAs are certified to work within the school setting. This bill would widen the scope of their practice and allow them to work in all settings, such as private practice, home health, early intervention, and hospitals, within the State. Since a significant shortage of SLPs available to provide these health services for patients across the State currently exists, this would be an impactful way to support SLPs and business owners who work in these settings, and allow more families to receive these much needed services.

As a former SLPA, and now a business owner who has provided supervision of SLPAs for over 25 years, this issue is of great importance to me. I truly value the support and services that SLPAs can provide to not only their employers and supervisors but to the community as well.

Thank you for your time and consideration of a vote in favor of House Bill 25-1075.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Barker, M.S., CCC/SLP

Tiffany L. Barker, M.S., CCC/SLP

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