

PROMOTE WORKFORCE DIVERSITY IN AUDIOLOGY AND SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY

ACTION REQUESTED

Cosponsor the Allied Health Workforce Diversity Act of 2021 (H.R. 3320/S. 1679).

ISSUE: Current Workforce Is Not Reflective of The U.S. Population

- Overall, 8.5% of ASHA members, nonmember certificate holders, international affiliates, and associates are members of a racial minority (compared with 28% of the U.S. population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau).^{1,2} In addition, 6.1% identified their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino, compared with 18.4% of the U.S. population.
- Of the individuals represented by ASHA, 8% have indicated that they have the described linguistic proficiency a bilingual service provider.³
- According to a U.S. Government Accountability Office study, a more diverse health care workforce—including a more diverse group of providers in training—is important because:
 - racial and ethnic minority groups disproportionately live in areas with provider shortages;
 - patients who receive care from members of their own racial and ethnic background tend to have better outcomes; and
 - members of racial and ethnic minority groups are more likely to practice in shortage areas.⁴

SOLUTION: Cosponsor H.R. 3320/S. 1679, to Increase Opportunities to Support a More Diverse Workforce

- Supporting individuals from underrepresented backgrounds, including racial and ethnic minorities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, in entering and completing educational programs will help increase a diverse workforce in the professions of audiology and speech-language pathology.
- The Allied Health Workforce Diversity Act of 2021 (H.R. 3320/S. 1679)—modelled after the existing Increasing Nursing Workforce Diversity program (42 U.S. Code § 296m)—would authorize grants to increase the participation and retention of diverse students in programs that train and educate audiology, speech-language pathology, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and respiratory therapy professionals.
- Last Congress, the House included language from the Allied Health Workforce Diversity Act of 2019 (H.R. 3637) in the Educating Medical Professionals and Optimizing Workforce Efficiency and Readiness (EMPOWER) for Health Act of 2019 (H.R. 2781), which passed the House by a voice vote in October 2019.
- Congress should support the passage of legislation to create the Allied Health Workforce Diversity program to ensure the makeup of the health care workforce in the U.S. evolves to mirror the makeup of the overall population. Having a more diverse workforce helps close the gap on provider shortages and effectively addresses the health care needs of all Americans.

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2021). *Profile of ASHA members and affiliates, year-end 2020*. www.asha.org.

² U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). *2019 American Community Survey*. <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?q=United%20States&q=0100000US>.

³ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2021). *Demographic profile of ASHA members providing bilingual services, year-end 2020*. www.asha.org.

⁴ U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2009). *Graduate Medical Education: Trends in Training and Student Debt, 09-438R*. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-09-438r.pdf>.

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