

# Keystater

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# Message From the President – Dana Bitetti



**G**reetings PSHA Members! It is hard to believe that in just a month I will become past-president and pass the baton. We have an amazing group of

dedicated board members, and I am excited to welcome our new board members in July!

It was so nice to see many familiar and new faces at this year's PSHA Convention! Thank you to the VP for Convention Planning and Program Mary Weidner, the topic chairs and the entire Convention Committee for an impressive list of sessions. Also thank you to Amy Caye and Craven Management Associates for all you do behind the scenes to pull off this event. This opportunity for professional development directly aligned with our new mission and vision, as current professionals and students participated in sessions across a wide variety of topics related to professional education, advocacy, and inclusion with the goal of "enhancing the quality of life and human right to communicate across the commonwealth." Furthermore, I enjoyed handing out hundreds of PSHA stickers in the hope that they will be displayed prominently where you can open the door to conversations regarding the important work of state associations. Didn't get a PSHA sticker? Just ask me! (And then ask me again, because I get a lot of email and I don't mind follow ups!)

If you have communicated with me as PSHA president, you may have noticed at times, I use exclamation points without hesitation. This is because I am often excited by the accomplishments of our executive board, committees and individual members as we all work to advance the mission and vision of our state association. Yet I know there is so much more to do!

Below I have provided some general updates to issues and activities mentioned in my last *Keystater* message as well as other important news:

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## • **PDE Certification Pathway:**

Our work with the Pennsylvania Department of Education to create a pathway to move between the Education Specialist and Instructional Certificates is nearing completion. A dedicated group of school-based speech-language pathologists (SLPs) and university directors contributed to revising the competency documents which will now include information on how to move between certifications. We will continue to be in contact with the department about a timeline in which revisions will go into effect.

## • **Interstate Compact:**

We continue to support the process toward Pennsylvania becoming a part of the Audiology & Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact (ASLP-IC). We have written letters to support recent bills that, if adopted, will resolve the issues with background checks and remove barriers to implementing interstate compacts in Pennsylvania.

• **Tri-Alliance:** PSHA leadership continues to meet with our Tri-Alliance with occupational therapy (POTA) and physical therapy (APTA-PA) and representatives from all our national associations. We have had productive conversations with a private insurer in Pennsylvania and we are revisiting strategies to advocate for higher Medicaid reimbursement rates.

• **Boosting Our Visibility:** Please check our Government Relations report contained in this issue regarding current legislation. (There's a lot!) In addition to monitoring bills, we are in the process of boosting our visibility with our legislators. We are creating a document that will be provided to our legislators discussing who we are as an organization and the important role that SLPs and audiologists play across various employment settings. We are also beginning to organize a Hill Day for the fall. Please continue to view and share our Monthly Advocacy Updates

## • **Leadership Development**

**Program:** Speaking of boosting our

visibility – our second cohort of new leaders completed the PSHA Leadership Advocacy Network (PLAN) Leadership Development Program (LDP) this Spring. New this year was a final collaborative project. Members of the LDP collecting stories and testimonials to create a video and infographics to raise awareness of our professions in the state. Look out for their final products soon and the announcement to join our next PLAN leadership cohort in the fall. A big thank you to our generous donors, as again this year we were able to sponsor the cost of participation for every student member. Please contact PSHA if you are interested in sponsoring one of the next generation of leaders in Pennsylvania!

• **New Subcommittee:** PSHA has created a Private Practice Subcommittee as part of the larger Healthcare/Telepractice Committee. This committee will focus on the unique issues of private practice owners in the state.

• **Students:** I am always impressed by the student poster sessions and student advocacy efforts at the Convention! Several student-led posters were awarded meritorious submissions. NSSLHA students from across Pennsylvania also engaged in an advocacy competition funded by our ASHA grant, culminating in the student reception attended by Angie Armbrust from the McNees Winter Group, Senator Lindsey Williams, Representative Brandon Markosek and Representative Arvind Venkat. Furthermore, the DEIA Committee has engaged NSSLHA groups in important case study discussions led by the student officers. All these activities let me know that we have a strong pipeline of future researchers, leaders and advocates!

• **New Advocacy Inquiry Form:** I also know that you all are advocating every day for your clients and your profession. We would love to hear from you! Have an idea of how we can serve you better or have a question about an issue? Use our new Advocacy Inquiry Form created by Caron Anthony-Higley, vice

*continued on page 3*

## President's Message

*continued from page 2*

president for professional practice in speech-language pathology! The form replaces our old "Contact Us" system to better direct your comments and questions to the appropriate committee.

• **Connecting with Other State Associations:** I have had opportunities to connect with other state association presidents through professional development offerings sponsored by ASHA and also Council for State Speech-Language-Hearing Association Presidents (CSAP). By connecting with other state associations, we learn more about how we face similar challenges and potential solutions.

Finally, and as always, thank you all for your membership and commitment to PSHA! If you have been wanting to get involved, but are not sure to what extent, just know you will not be alone! We are here to support you. I will miss being your president, but will be close by, continuing to address current projects, participating in Town Halls and supporting the new board. I am always happy to conduct in-services related to the value of state association membership and I will bring stickers (in person or virtually)!

*Dana Bitetti*

Dana Bitetti, PhD, CCC-SLP  
President

## Newly Elected PSHA Board Members

**C**ongratulations to the following newly elected/re-elected PSHA Executive Board Members. Terms begin on July 1.

**President-Elect:** Nicole Billak, MS, CCC-SLP

**Vice President for Social Media and Member Engagement:** Paige Hemingway

**Vice President for Governmental Relations:** Tamara Sepe, MS, CCC-SLP

**Vice President for Membership and Ethical Practices:** Amy Francek, MA, CCC-SLP

**Treasurer:** Rebecca Bawayan, PhD, CCC-SLP

**Student Representative:** Mary Jane Granito

We still have an opening for the position of vice president for professional practices – audiology/education of individuals who are deaf/hard of hearing. If you are interested in serving on PSHA's Executive Board in this capacity, please contact the PSHA Office at [psha@psha.org](mailto:psha@psha.org).

## Introducing Our New STAR Representative

**W**e are thrilled to announce the newest addition to our team, **Theresa Jacopetti**, who will be serving as our State Advocates for Reimbursement (STAR) representative. As part of the ASHA STAR Network, Ms. Jacopetti will play a pivotal role in supporting our ongoing advocacy efforts.

The ASHA STAR Network is dedicated to providing leadership, guidance and support on crucial topics concerning coverage,

reimbursement and service delivery under state Medicaid programs and private payers.

We express our gratitude to Caterina F. Staltari, our outgoing STAR Representative, for her dedication and hard work.

Curious to learn more about the STAR Network and State-Based Advocacy Networks initiatives? Visit <https://www.asha.org/advocacy/state/state-networks/>.

PENNSYLVANIA SPEECH-LANGUAGE-HEARING ASSOCIATION

# Keystater

## SUBMISSIONS

Submissions of articles, manuscripts, reports and letters to the editor are encouraged. The **Keystater** also welcomes suggestions of editorial coverage. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit submissions for length and clarity.

The statements and opinions contained in the articles of the **Keystater** are solely those of the individual authors and contributors and not of the Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association. The appearance of advertisements in the newsletter is not a warranty, endorsement or approval of the products or of their safety. PSHA disclaims responsibility for any injury to persons or property resulting from any ideas or products referred to in the articles or advertisements.

**Please send all correspondence and editorial submissions to the editor:**

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### Advertising

The **Keystater** solicits and welcomes advertisements. Acceptance of advertising does not imply product endorsement by the PSHA Executive Board. Rates and submission deadlines are available upon request from Amy Caye, PSHA Account Manager, 700 McKnight Park Drive, Suite 708, Pittsburgh, PA 15237, 412-366-9858.

[www.psha.org](http://www.psha.org)

## Keep Your Information Up-To-Date!

Log on to the Member Center at [www.psha.org](http://www.psha.org), enter your Last Name and your Member Number.

You can then edit your account information, renew your membership, register for an event, search for a member and read the **Keystater**.

# Government Relations Updates

**T**hank you to the many committee and board members who have contributed feedback on various legislation this year. Your feedback helps PSHA to craft well-informed responses to legislative issues. Your voice really matters! If you want to be more involved, please consider joining one of our committees.

Thank you to the McNees Winter Group for providing up-to-date insights and monitoring of Pennsylvania state government actions relevant to the professions.

**BIG NEWS:** After many years of advocacy, we are seeing movement in the interstate compact, with two relevant bills introduced (see HB 2200 and HB 1235 below)!!! Hopefully this will help to address shortages in Pennsylvania!

## Harrisburg Highlights:

Angie Armbrust, from McNees Winter Group, provided a summary of highlights from Harrisburg at our most recent board meeting in April:

“In February, Governor Shapiro presented his ambitious vision for the state’s future, spanning a broad spectrum of initiatives aimed at tackling systemic inequities, fostering economic development, and enhancing social welfare, and marking a significant increase from previous budgets.

At the core of Shapiro’s \$48.3 billion budget proposal lies a substantial increase in funding for public education. With a proposed \$1.1 billion boost for public school operations and instruction, he’s aiming to narrow the gap between affluent and underserved school districts, a disparity underscored by a recent court ruling.”

View the full press release from the Governor’s Office here (<https://www.governor.pa.gov/newsroom/governor-shapiro-unveils-2024-25-budget-proposal-to-get-stuff-done-create-opportunity-and-advance-real-freedom-for-all-pennsylvanians/>) for more details about this historic budget proposal.

## Recent Legislation of Interest and Advocacy Actions:

**HB1512:** “Ensuring Telemedicine Access for Pennsylvanians” would require insurers to cover telemedicine. This bill received second consideration in the House in April and is in House Appropriations

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awaiting action. PSHA wrote a letter of support for this item in March 2024.

**HB1867:** “Prohibiting Mandatory Electronic Credit Card Payment Fees Charged to Health Care Providers for Reimbursement of In-Network Clinical Services” requires insurers to offer a means of reimbursement other than use of credit card companies (that burden providers with additional fees). This bill awaits action in the House Insurance Committee and PSHA sent a letter of support in March 2024.

**HB2011:** “Removing Lead from Drinking Water in Schools” would require use of lead filtering drinking fountains in schools. This was introduced and referred to the House Education Committee, PSHA sent letter of support in March 2024.

**HB2200:** “FBI-Approved Language to Implement Licensure Compact” will pave the way for compact bills to move by addressing concerns about background checks. This was scheduled for committee consideration April 15, 2024 and PSHA sent a letter of support for this bill.

**HB1235:** Authorizing Pennsylvania to Join the Audiology & Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact: introduced by freshman Democratic legislator Rep. Venkat. PSHA has written a letter of support. PSHA will advocate for movement once HB 2200 moves.

## Legislation we are Actively Monitoring (via McNees-Winter Group)

**SB739:** Telemedicine

**SB393:** Educator certification and employment for immigrants in Pennsylvania:

**HB1067:** Educator Certification and Employment for Immigrants in Pennsylvania (companion bill to SB 393)

**HB1249:** Tax Credit for New Nurses, Teachers, and Police Officers

**HB342:** Improving College Transition for Students with Disabilities

**HB57:** Professional License Applications—Paper Applications (Former HB 855)

**SB514:** Requiring Child Lead Testing

**HB998:** Literacy Achievement for All Pennsylvanians

**State Board of Examiners in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology PROPOSED Regulation #16A6808:** Licensure by Endorsement

**HB1356:** Licensure of Professional Music Therapists under the Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors Act (Former HB 2573)

**SB898:** Licensure of Professional Music Therapists

**HB498:** Voluntary autism screening for children from 18 months to 36 months

**HB1609/HR181:** Insurance Coverage of Hearing Aids

**HR155:** Recognizing June as National Aphasia Awareness Month

**PA Department of Insurance Commonwealth Essential Health Benefits Benchmark Plan**

**HB143:** Pennsylvania Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program

**HB928:** Creating Dyslexia Intervention Professional Development Requirements (Formerly HB 2780)

**HB1104:** Michael’s Law—Admission Fairness for Persons with Care Attendants

**HB1510:** Health Care Practitioner Credentialing Act (Prior HB 2613)

**HB1668:** Protections for Drivers With Autism

**SB932:** ‘Communication Impairment’ License Designation for Autistic, Deaf, and Hard of Hearing – Assisting First Responders.

**HB1811:** Communication Impairment License Designations for Autistic, Deaf, and Hard of Hearing Drivers.

If you have questions, ideas or just want to be involved, let us know!

Email us at [PSHA@psha.org](mailto:PSHA@psha.org) or complete our new Advocacy Inquiry Form!

*Tamara Sepe*

Tamara Sepe, MS, CCC-SLP  
Vice President for Governmental Relations

*Erin Buckwalter*

Erin Buckwalter, MS, CCC-SLP  
Vice President for Governmental Relations

*Angie J.M. Armbrust*

Angie J.M. Armbrust, MPA  
Senior Associate, McNees-Winter Group, LLC

## 2024 PSHA Convention Wrap-Up



### CREATING A VIBRANT PROFESSION

**PITTSBURGH 2024**

The PSHA Convention, *Creating a Vibrant Profession*, was a huge success! It would not have been possible without everyone that attended, the Convention Planning Committee, PSHA Office and amazing speakers. Our attendance was the highest it has been in years, and it was wonderful to see many packed rooms. Thank you for the helpful feedback from the Convention survey. Most attendees reported an “excellent” overall experience. You provided a lot of good speaker suggestions and other ideas for future Conventions, which the Convention

Planning Committee and I will carefully review.

So, the big question is: what is happening for 2025? The plan at this point is to have an in-person Convention in the spring. We are in the process of sending requests for proposals, but do not have a date or location at this point. You might be wondering why we do not yet have these details. Very transparently, Conventions have become extremely expensive to run, especially at hotels. We are carefully looking at the financials from this past Convention

to make informed decisions about what is within our budget for 2025. In order for Conventions to be fruitful for both the organization and attendees, we need to consider both the business side as well as the membership preferences. Many of you shared your input regarding 2025 on the survey, which will be very valuable once we begin planning. Details will be forthcoming via email and social media. Please stay tuned!

Our Convention and membership sustain our organization. It is a critical time for us to stay involved so that we can create a vibrant profession in Pennsylvania. If you are interested in serving on the 2025 Convention Planning Committee, please reach out! [mweidner@pennwest.edu](mailto:mweidner@pennwest.edu).

I look forward to seeing you at the 2025 Convention!

*Mary Weidner*

Mary Weidner, PhD, CCC-SLP  
Vice President for Convention Planning and Program

### Thank you to the following 2024 PSHA Convention sponsors:

- Student Reception: **Salus University**
- Session Sponsors: **NESHAP and Moravian University**



## PSHA 2025 Convention

### Stay Tuned for Information on the PSHA 2025 Convention

Please stay tuned to PSHA’s social media, eblasts, *InBrief* newsletter and the PSHA website at [www.psha.org](http://www.psha.org) for information on the dates and location of the 2025 Convention.

# PSHA 2024 Honors and Awards

## Honors of the Association

Congratulations to Nancy Carlino, MA, CCC-SLP.

## Rising Star Award

Congratulations to Chantal Whiteduck, MS, CCC-SLP

## Amy S. Goldman Advocacy Award

Congratulations to PSHA DEIA Committee

## 2024 Appreciation of Service Awards

Thank you to all the members of the 2024 Convention Committee.

## 2024 PLAN Certificates

Congratulations to the following participants of the PSHA Leadership & Advocacy Network (PLAN). PLAN is a PSHA initiative to promote advocacy, leadership, mentorship and networking among those in the professions of speech-language pathology and audiology. This initiative includes continuing education opportunities, as well as other programs and events that support collaborative engagement of students and professionals across the state.

|                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Nicole Billak      | Louise Keegan     |
| Dana Bitetti       | Emily Laracy      |
| Erin Buckwalter    | Tyler Lawson      |
| Nancy Carlino      | Margaret Merk     |
| Samantha Delmar    | Christopher Paulo |
| Isabel Falguera    | Isabelle Snyder   |
| Stephanie Fazio    | Emily Sweet       |
| Lexi Gilchrest     | Chantal Whiteduck |
| Monica Kaniamattam |                   |

## 2024 PSHA Life Members

Congratulations to the following PSHA members who have attained the age of 65 and have been a member for more than 15 consecutive years:

Evelyn Edinburg      Theresa Jacopetti

## NSSLHA Chapter Honors

Misericordia University Chapter

## Outgoing Board Members

Thank you to the following members of the PSHA Executive Board who will be leaving the board this year:

|                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Madison Hoffman | Margaret Merk     |
| Louise Keegan   | Brianna Robertson |
| Yvette McCoy    |                   |

## Isabella Fredo Earns Von Drach Memorial Scholarship

PSHA is pleased to announce that Isabella Fredo, a second-year graduate student at Misericordia University, has been awarded the

prestigious 2024 Von Drach Memorial Scholarship. This scholarship recognizes Isabella's exceptional academic achievements, research contributions, clinical excellence and dedicated preservice contributions to the field of speech-language pathology through her graduate and undergraduate education.

Through the support of her parents and high school teachers, Isabella found her calling to help others through speech-language pathology after attending a health career fair at her school. Here she was introduced to a speech-language pathologist, and it ignited her interest in the field where she has since seized every opportunity to gain exposure to her future career, from volunteering at a rehabilitation hospital to interning with a school speech-language pathologist. This drive has propelled Isabella to excel in her studies and seek out research opportunities during her studies at Misericordia. "Isabella graciously manages a rigorous course load while working toward the promotion of our field through research and service," said Dr. Adina S. Rosenthal, who supervised Isabella's diagnostic clinic rotation. "She is intelligent, reliable and confident in her abilities."

Isabella has excelled academically through both her undergraduate and graduate education. Her academic strength is matched by her passion for research. Isabella has worked with Dr. Reethee Antony in the Neuroelectrophysiology Lab looking at EEGs and studying the brain. Additional work was completed on the COVID-19 Pandemic and the transition of learning platforms on undergraduate speech-language pathology, which was presented at both ASHA and PSHA. She has undertaken independent studies and, "Isabella's research is extensive and impactful," praised Dr. Glen Tellis, professor and chair of Misericordia's Speech-Language Pathology Department. "She combines lab projects and thesis work to advance evidence-based practices."

Beyond academics, Isabella has added philanthropic endeavors onto her resume. Through her local National Student Speech-Language

Hearing Association (NSSLHA) chapter at Misericordia, Isabella has worked to fundraise and participate in interprofessional and intercollegiate work for underserved individuals needing access to services in Belize. The trip left her "fulfilled and grateful" for her experiences.

Isabella continues to develop her clinical skills across disorders like aphasia, stuttering language disorders, and cognitive deficits. Her recent fieldwork placement in an acute care setting at Milton S. Hershey Medical Center will further expand her knowledge with an adult population after spending time in York, Pennsylvania working with students from kindergarten through fourth grade on a range of needs. The students she worked with requiring augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) needs left an indelible mark that will inform her future research.

Service is a hallmark of Isabella's journey. Memberships with PSHA and NSSLHA, including the PSHA Healthcare-Telepractice Committee, where she serves as a social media liaison have given her an outlet for advocacy and learning from professionals across the state. She also participated in the inaugural PSHA Leadership Development Program and developed skills that will serve her in the future both in the field and within leadership roles. "Isabella's resilience, compassion and thirst for knowledge will undoubtedly allow her to make a profound impact in speech-language pathology," Dr. Tellis stated. "We eagerly await her future contributions as a clinician, researcher, educator and leader in our field."

As Isabella looks ahead to pursuing her PhD, this scholarship honors her incredible achievements so far. PSHA and the entire speech-language pathology community celebrate Isabella's bright future of improving lives through compassionate, evidence-based care.

Visit [www.psha.org](http://www.psha.org) to read descriptions of all of the awards. Know someone who deserves to be honored? Nominate someone for next year's awards by February 15, 2025.

## Special Announcement for our Fellow PSHA Members



The volunteer members of your PSHA Executive Board are thrilled to share some exciting news with you that should add a dash of sunshine to your upcoming summer plans. Over the past few months, PSHA has been hard at work securing two fantastic new partnerships with leading vendors that cater their products to the professional needs of audiologists and speech-language pathologists (SLPs). We think you'll agree that we have a few sweet deals lined up for our fellow PSHA members just in time to kick off the summer fun!

### **Partnership #1: *AudiologyOnline.com & SpeechPathology.com***

Get ready to unlock an amazing array of assets with *AudiologyOnline.com & SpeechPathology.com*! Dive into a world of resources that includes ASHA-approved continuing education courses available 24/7, Graduate-level SLP credits through the University of the Pacific at Bernard College, journal news based on timely research and a career

services center with opportunities to peruse the job market. Additionally, you'll will be invited to attend the annual Industry Innovations Summit where audiologists will say hello to endless trends in new hearing technology! Unlock your savings by logging into the member portal on the PSHA website for more information on these discounts.

### **Partnership #2: *Speech Therapy Toolbox***

Are you looking for some of the latest speech therapy resources for your practice? Look no further! Our exclusive partnership with the *Speech Therapy Toolbox* brings you unparalleled discounts on the latest tools to enhance your professional practice. The *Speech Therapy Toolbox* hosts a comprehensive list of pediatric speech therapy TOOLS, a library of parent handouts, specialized tools to assist with caseload organization and printable activities to send home with families for carryover of skills. Additionally, the *Speech Therapy Toolbox* offers professional development sessions that are practical and actionable along with membership in a private

Facebook community group. Elevate your therapy game this summer by logging into the membership portal on the PSHA website for more information to secure this discount.

### **Access Your Exclusive PSHA Member Discounts**

Getting your hands on these incredible deals is as easy as soaking up the summer sun! Simply visit the member portal of the PSHA website and log in to your account with your last name and member number. There, you'll find all the details on how to redeem your discounts with *Audiologyonline.com*, *SpeechPathology.com* and the *Speech Therapy Toolbox*. Don't miss out on this golden opportunity to brighten your professional practice while saving big through your PSHA membership!

Wishing all of our members a thriving professional journey along with a sensational summer!

*Caron Anthony-Higley*

Caron Anthony-Higley, PhD, MEd, MA, CCC-SLP/L  
Vice President for Professional Practices: Speech-Language Pathology

## In Memorium - Dr. Kathleen Helfrich-Miller



On April 22, 2024, PSHA lost a leader, a colleague, and a friend. Kathy Miller was all of those things to those who had the pleasure of knowing her and working with her.

Kathy served PSHA as the Vice-President of Governmental Relations and President. Kathy held these positions at a critical time in the licensure law re-write. Kathy was a tireless worker, a strong advocate for the profession, her colleagues,

and clients, and the ultimate team player. She made everyone around her better.

What I will remember and miss most about Kathy is her positivity. She always showed up and was ready to do what needed to be done with a smile on her face. Kathy put so much love and energy into her work with PSHA and her private practice at Rehabilitation Specialists. Her passion for her work was evident to anyone who crossed paths with her. She was one of those people who you learned from just by being around her.

While our thoughts are with Kathy's family, our gratitude is deep for having been a part of her journey. We will miss you, Kathy. You made a difference.

*Craig Coleman*

Craig Coleman, PhD, CCC-SLP  
Former PSHA President

# State Advocates for Reimbursement (STAR) Updates

The following are notes from a recent STAR meeting:

## Medicare

- The National Rural Health Association endorsed the Medicare Audiology Access Improvement Act (H.R. 6445/S. 2377) following a meeting with ASHA, AAA, and ADA.
- ASHA, along with the Academy of Doctors of Audiology (ADA) and American Academy of Audiology (AAA), met with Sen. Elizabeth Warren's (D-MA) office to discuss building support on and off Capitol Hill for the Medicare Audiology Access Improvement Act (S. 2377). Sen. Warren is the lead sponsor of this legislation, which she has advocated for before the Senate Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction over Medicare Part B.
- ASHA, ADA, and AAA met with Democratic health policy staff for the House Ways and Means Committee to discuss the Medicare Audiology Access Improvement Act, with a focus on expediting a "score" for the bill from the Congressional Budget Office.
- ASHA, ADA, and AAA met with Democratic health policy staff for the Senate Finance Committee to discuss the Medicare Audiology Access Improvement Act. Covered topics included evidence-based linkages between access to hearing health care and social isolation, depression, and cognitive decline in older adults.
- ASHA submitted a statement for the record to the House Energy & Commerce Health Subcommittee for a legislative hearing held by the subcommittee on April 10, "Legislative Proposals to Support Patient Access to Telehealth Services." Two ASHA supported bills were discussed, the Expanded Telehealth Access Act (H.R. 3875), and the Telehealth Modernization Act of 2024 (H.R. 7623), both of which would make permanent telehealth authority under Medicare Part B for audiologists and SLPs.
- The Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Inpatient Prospective Payment System proposed rule (which includes

policies for long-term care hospitals (LTCH)) was released April 10. Each setting will receive a small payment increase over FY2024 and Medicare proposes to add four items associated with social determinants of health (SDOH) to the LTCH assessment tool.

- The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has issued a final rule regulating Medicare Advantage (MA) plans for 2025 that includes a number of important patient protections that ASHA supported in its comments to the proposed rule earlier this year. Such protections include: o Guardrails for compensation arrangements to agents and brokers that ensure patients are enrolled in the MA plan that meets their needs; o A new requirement that MA plans send beneficiaries a mid-year notification for any unused supplemental benefits such as hearing, vision, or dental benefits; and
- Ensuring that the annual utilization management review process that MA plans must engage in includes a health equity analysis.

## Private Health Plans

- BCBS Federal Employee Plan has put out an updated policy with more details on medical necessity of hearing aid coverage for patients with hearing loss of 40dB or less. See more about the policy in the updated BCBS FEP Guideline 005 Hearing Aids
- ASHA had a successful meeting with Highmark and Helion staff discussing challenges with the prior and secondary authorization process, and other provider concerns. Providers having trouble with the authorization process can submit questions with Highmark's UM team. They are working through technical issues with the new system and ask that providers submit tickets detailing technical issues through the Service Desk

## Update Medicare Payment

Here's your chance to help update Medicare payment for audiology and speech-language pathology

services by participating in the clinician practice information (CPI) survey beginning later this month! Randomly selected audiologists and speech-language pathologists (SLPs) in private and group practices will receive an email from Mathematica, the survey administrator, to participate in the clinician practice information (CPI) survey! The intent of the effort is to collect updated and accurate data on practice costs, which are a key element of clinician payment. This information has not been updated since last collected over 15 years ago and it is critically important to collect current data to ensure accurate payment. For more information about the survey, how it works, and what is done with this data visit the ASHA website.

## Medicare Payment Cuts

ASHA is continuing to lobby congress, coordinate with other impacted provider associations, and press CMS directly on these cuts. You also have a opportunity to Tell Congress to Stop the Medicare Cuts! by sending a letter to your representatives through ASHA's voter voice website. If you click the link above the webpage will generate an editable letter that will automatically be sent to your state representatives. We encourage you to edit the form letter sharing your personal perspective and the impact these cuts have on you and your patients. Representatives have told us that personal statements in these letters have a much bigger impact than the form letters alone.

Each of these efforts can have a big impact on Medicare rates. Please share this with your colleagues and encourage them to engage if they are selected for the survey. Everyone can send a letter to tell congress to stop the Medicare cuts- advocacy is strengthened by your voice.

*Caterina Staltari*

Caterina Staltari, MA, CCC-SLP  
Past STAR Representative

## Vice President for Professional Practices - Speech-Language Pathology

### How can audiologists and speech-language pathologists improve working conditions for the profession as a collective group?

Speech-language pathologists and audiologists can improve working conditions for the profession as a collective group through the following volunteer efforts:

#### Engage with Professional Associations

Volunteering with state and national professional associations like PSHA and ASHA can drive initiatives to improve working conditions. Serving on advocacy committees or task forces within these associations allows professionals to directly influence policies and regulations impacting the field.<sup>[5]</sup>

#### Participate in Licensing Board Meetings

Attending state licensing board meetings and providing public comments advocating for positive changes to licensure requirements, continuing education mandates, or other regulations that impact working conditions.<sup>[5]</sup>

#### Support Legislative Advocacy

Volunteering with professional committees and advocacy networks through PSHA and ASHA helps to promote legislation that benefits professionals, such as reducing administrative burdens, aligning certification with best practices, or improving reimbursement rates.<sup>[5]</sup>

#### Pursue Appointments to State Boards/Committees

Volunteering to serve on state licensing boards, advisory committees or task forces enables professionals to directly shape policies and regulations governing working conditions from within these decision-making bodies.<sup>[5]</sup>

By leveraging their collective

volunteer efforts through professional channels, audiologists and speech-language pathologists can drive meaningful improvements to working conditions and practice environments at both the state and national levels.<sup>[5]</sup>

#### Citations:

<sup>[1]</sup> <https://blog.nsslha.org/2019/11/12/find-your-perfect-setting-through-volunteer-work/>

<sup>[2]</sup> <https://chsstl.org/about-us/volunteer/>

<sup>[3]</sup> <https://www.pshc.org/help>

<sup>[4]</sup> <https://speechpathologymastersprograms.com/speech-pathology-careers/speech-therapy-volunteer-options/>

<sup>[5]</sup> <https://www.nsslha.org/programs/community-outreach/>

<sup>[6]</sup> Generated with the assistance of Perplexity

### Why should you volunteer for a state level professional association like PSHA?

You should volunteer for a state-level professional organization like PSHA for several key reasons:

#### Influence Licensure and Certification Policies

By volunteering with the advocacy or legislative affairs committees of state professional associations, you can directly influence policies and regulations around licensure, certification and scope of practice for audiologists and speech-language pathologists in your state.<sup>[5]</sup> This allows you to help shape better working conditions for the profession.

#### Drive Initiatives for Workplace Improvements

State associations often have task forces or committees focused on issues like reimbursement rates, caseload requirements, continuing education mandates, etc. As a volunteer, you can provide input

and support initiatives aimed at improving these workplace factors.<sup>[5]</sup>

#### Access to Networking and Mentorship

Volunteering connects you with experienced professionals in leadership roles within the state association. This expands your network and provides mentorship opportunities to learn from those shaping policies impacting your profession.<sup>[2]</sup>

#### Gain Experience for Career Advancement

Volunteer leadership roles within state associations look great on your resumé and demonstrate your commitment to the field. This experience can aid in career advancement opportunities down the road.<sup>[2][5]</sup>

By leveraging volunteer efforts through state professional associations, audiologists and speech-language pathologists can collectively drive meaningful improvements to licensure standards, workplace policies and overall working conditions across their state.<sup>[2][5]</sup>

#### Citations:

<sup>[1]</sup> <https://blog.nsslha.org/2019/11/12/find-your-perfect-setting-through-volunteer-work/>

<sup>[2]</sup> <https://www.asha.org/about/governance/volunteering/>

<sup>[3]</sup> <https://chsstl.org/about-us/volunteer/>

<sup>[4]</sup> <https://www.pshc.org/help>

<sup>[5]</sup> <https://speechpathologymastersprograms.com/speech-pathology-careers/speech-therapy-volunteer-options/>

<sup>[6]</sup> Generated with the assistance of Perplexity

*Caron Anthony-Higley*

Caron Anthony-Higley, PhD, MEd, MA, CCC-SLP/L  
Vice President for Professional Practices: Speech-Language Pathology

## Student Voice

As I reflect on the last year spent as your student representative, I'm amazed at all we have accomplished! When I first applied for this position, I was a little apprehensive. How much can I contribute as a student? I hardly have any clinical experience. I know nothing about the legislative process. I don't know what I can bring to the table. Some students reading this might share these same feelings.

I'm here to confirm that not only has this opportunity as your student representative and PSHA member prepared me for more leadership positions, but has made me stand out on applications for my clinical fellow year, highlighted skills I didn't know I had and given me a glimpse into behind-the-scenes of speech-language pathology.

What better way to learn about legislation that directly impacts our clinical practice than becoming an active PSHA member. As we look towards the future of PSHA, it starts with students. We have the voices to advocate for our professions, for ample funding, for workplace support and for real and effective change for the populations we serve and the work that we do.

At the 2024 PSHA Convention, we had a wonderful turnout and student support was through the roof! It was such a pleasure to connect with undergraduates and graduates alike. One of the major highlights was discussing benefits of advocacy through action. We had three legislators join us in person for the Student Reception. Representative Brandon Markosek shared his experiences navigating a stuttering disorder and current action on House Bill 2268 that will require better insurance coverage for stuttering services. Senator Lindsey Williams and Representative Arvind Venkat shared how students and young clinicians can and should become involved in advocacy and legislation to help pave a better tomorrow for professionals. Senator John Fetterman also recorded a video where he shared his experiences after a stroke, offering a glimpse into necessity for continued services and our scope of practice. All of this was spearheaded by Angie

Armbrust, our PSHA lobbyist, who helps us make sense of current and future legislative efforts and how we can make our voices heard to improve practices. As a student, I was so impressed by these legislators making time to answer our questions and share their devotion to advocating for us. This was utterly inspiring as I now enter the world as a clinical fellow knowing it just takes an idea and a passion to move legislative mountains. This proved to me that advocacy is actually less intimidating than it seems on the surface.

The Student Advocacy Competition served as a platform for students to advocate for crucial issues within the profession in a creative way. Congratulations to all the winners and participants for their hard work and dedication towards raising awareness and promoting change.

Another Convention highlight was this year's Student Drive. I selected the Mid-Atlantic Aphasia Conference which is a group of individuals and caregivers across Pennsylvania and New Jersey affected by aphasia. Through initiatives like poetry, art, open conversation, social groups, music, 5ks, yoga and community education, this group is making strides to get the word out!

Since meeting some members last year when they visited Moravian to educate my cohort on aphasia, I was so moved with the passion and dedication I saw to make the world a better place. One of their advocacy items is a card that individuals can keep in a wallet that details their aphasia diagnosis and gives some cues that could elicit a clearer response, should they be having difficulties communicating. Rather than adding more stress, this small card can break down communication barriers that could lead to agitation and misunderstanding. Should you wish, you can donate or connect with them visit [midatlanticaphasiaconference.com](http://midatlanticaphasiaconference.com).

Overall, Convention was a blast and I'm so lucky to have met so many of you! Looking ahead, we have various other ways you can contribute to PSHA. A simple and effective way

to get involved while adding clinical skills to your repertoire is to host a DEIA community of practice event. NSSLHA groups have been doing so for the last few months and these events have brought together undergrads and grads alike to discuss all things DEIA. Each month, we discuss a case study in small groups over Zoom and integrate evidence-based practice to come to a solution. We end each event with a call to action on how you can use the strategies discussed to promote diversity, equity, inclusivity and accessibility within your own community. Please reach out to [PSHA@psha.org](mailto:PSHA@psha.org) for more information.

Getting involved is very easy and I encourage any other students out there-no matter where you're at in your journey-to reach out to us by emailing [PSHA@psha.org](mailto:PSHA@psha.org) or by sending us a message on our student Instagram, @PSHAstudents. If you have an interest and a passion, we have a place for you.

I want to thank each and every one of you for attending PSHA, devoting yourself to service in our profession, becoming lifelong learners and being active PSHA members now to plan for our future.



Thank you for supporting me as I culminated my graduate school journey as your PSHA student representative. I'm excited to announce **Mary Jane Granito** as your next student representative and know she will

do amazing things to keep our momentum as students and advocates. Please stay in touch and continue to inspire others through the work you do!

Instagram: @PSHAstudents;  
Facebook: PSHA Students; Email: [psashstudents@gmail.com](mailto:psashstudents@gmail.com)

*Maggie Merk*

Maggie Merk  
PSHA Student Representative



Marywood University's NSSLHA Chapter hosted and participated in various community service opportunities, spread awareness for our profession through in-person and virtual advocacy and organized social events for our members throughout the 2023-2024 academic year. We appreciate all of the support of students, faculty and community members that helped to make our events a huge success.

Our chapter started off the Fall 2023 semester with our annual Walk to End Alzheimer's, which has been an annual event for us over the years. This year we did not let the rain stop us as the participants walked 15 laps around Marywood's indoor track, totaling about 1.5 miles per person. Collectively, we raised \$1,100 for the Alzheimer's Association, an organization who continually provides support for individuals and families who are affected by Alzheimer's, and we are thankful for everyone who walked with us and showed their support



Walk to End Alzheimer's participants.

virtually. Around Halloween, we collaborated with other clubs and organizations on campus to host a Boo Bash for the students of Nativity

Miguel, a local elementary/middle school on Marywood's campus that provides educational opportunities to students who come from socio-economic hardships. Our chapter created a coloring worksheet with a number of Halloween American Sign Language (ASL) signs to teach to the kids. This was a fun way for our officers to give back to the community while spreading awareness for our profession. For the holidays, we partnered with Campus Ministry to "Adopt a Family," where we made a donation that would allow a family to buy groceries for a Thanksgiving dinner. Our chapter, in conjunction with St. Joseph's Center, a local non-profit agency in Scranton, Pennsylvania, collected various items and winter clothing for babies, toddlers and young children. We were thrilled to see support from so many community members in addition to people within our department.



Our chapter officers with the donations we received for St. Joseph's Center in Scranton.

We started the Spring 2024 semester off with a virtual community service event where we sent electronic Valentine's Day cards to children at St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital.

We surpassed our goal of 150 cards and sent 157! For our next service event, we will be collecting children's books on diversity, equity and inclusion for our on-campus clinic.

In terms of advocacy, our members sent emails to legislators advocating for communication and hearing-related disorders on Advocacy Day. For mental health awareness day in October, we participated in Marywood's campus wide event where we created a poster about mental health throughout our profession, both on the student and professional level. We are honored that our short videos about advocacy and the Walk to End Alzheimer's were reposted on both NSSLHA and ASHA's Instagrams last spring. We planned a week-long virtual advocacy event promoting World Hearing Day, which was on March 3. By using our social media platforms and sending emails to local legislators, we engaged our members and spread awareness for the importance of hearing.

Our first social gathering event of the Fall 2023 semester was a cookies and cider social where we offered our members fall-themed cookies and apple cider. It was nice to spend time with returning members and get to know the current first-year students. Our chapter also hosted a Trunk-or-Treat for the clients of Marywood's Speech-Language Clinic. The children had a fun time collecting candy and seeing everyone, many of whom were their clinicians and supervisors, dressed up in costumes. To kickstart the spring semester, we hosted another social event where we had hot chocolate and cookies for our members. As the weather starts to warm up, we plan on hosting more outdoor events!

We are thankful for the opportunities that this 2023-2024 academic year has brought us, and we cannot wait to see what next semester brings!

### Follow PSHA on Social Media

Stay up-to-date with the latest PSHA updates by following us on our social media platforms.



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## PSHA National Speech-Language-Hearing Month Contest Winners

**Congratulations** to the following winners of the PSHA National Speech-Language-Hearing Month Contests! All winners will be posted to the PSHA website at <https://psha.org/who-we-are/national-speech-language-hearing-month/>

**Essay Contest – 1st Place: Bryan Maldonado-Lopez (SLP: Katie Woods/Ephrata Area SD);**  
**2nd Place: Liberty Palko (SLP: Sharon Blake/Central Columbia SD)**

### Coloring Contest

**1st Place: Mason Tanner**  
SLP: Elyse King/Central Valley SD  
*Communication is More Than a Shot in the Dark!*



**2nd Place: Gwendolyn Lehr**  
SLP: Kim Hamacher/West York Area SD  
*Communication is More Than a Shot in the Dark!*



**3rd Place: Ellie Tanner**  
SLP: Sharon Blake/Central Columbia SD  
*Communication is More Than a Shot in the Dark!*



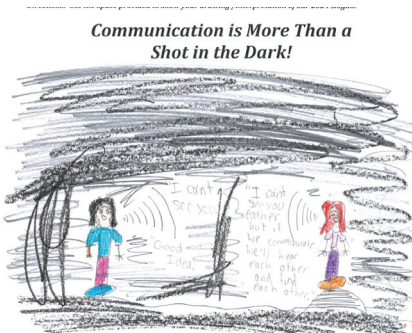
### Drawing Contest

SLP for all winners is Sharon Blake, Central Columbia SD

**1st Place: Mason Bencoter**



**2nd Place: Callie Rohrbach**



**3rd Place: Norah Scerbo**

