STUDENT LOANS: HIGHER EDUCATION REAUTHORIZATION

ACTION REQUESTED

As part of its reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA), Congress should ensure students seeking a graduate degree in audiology or speech-language pathology have access to appropriate levels of federally funded student loans.

BACKGROUND

Audiologists and speech-language pathologists (SLPs) work to ensure that individuals with disabilities have access to health care services and a free appropriate public education, as required by federal law. Students studying these fields should have access to federally funded student loans that meet their programs’ educational requirements. Recent proposals to change HEA include annual and lifetime limits on access to student loans. To meet a growing demand for professionals across all service-delivery settings, access to student loans that would educate and train more health care professionals should not be limited by arbitrary caps.

FACT AND FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th>Audiolists</th>
<th>Speech-Language Pathologists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment Demand Through 2026(^1,2)</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age Reporting Unpaid Student Debt(^3,4)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Amount of Unpaid Student Debt(^5,6)</td>
<td>$44,983</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational Requirements</td>
<td>Doctoral degree (by ASHA standards)</td>
<td>Master’s degree (in most work settings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensure Requirements(^7)</td>
<td>Varies by state; required in all states and the District of Columbia to practice</td>
<td>Varies by state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification Requirements</td>
<td>Varies by state and/or employer</td>
<td>Varies by state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Degree Cost (Tuition and Fees)(^8,9)</td>
<td>$76,000-150,000</td>
<td>$23,000-75,000</td>
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ASHA CONTACT:
Sofia Fox, Director of Political Affairs
sfox@asha.org
takeaction.asha.org
ASHA is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 198,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students.

Audiologists specialize in preventing and assessing hearing and balance disorders as well as providing audioligic treatment, including hearing aids.

Speech-language pathologists identify, assess, and treat speech and language problems, including swallowing disorders.

ASHA National Office
2200 Research Boulevard
Rockville, MD 20850-3289
301-296-5700
www.asha.org

ASHA Capitol Hill Office
444 N. Capitol St., NW, Suite 715
Washington, DC 20001
202-624-5951
takeaction.asha.org