



House Bill 523
Proponent Testimony
House Education Committee
February 24, 2026

Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Brennan, and members of the House Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments on House Bill 523, legislation to enact the Future Educators Support Act. My name is Maggie Kettler, and I write today on behalf of the Ohio Speech and Hearing Governmental Affairs Coalition (OSHGAC).

By way of background, OSHGAC is made up of representatives from the Ohio Academy of Audiology, the Ohio Council of Speech and Hearing Administrators, the Ohio School Speech-Pathology and Educational Audiology Coalition, and the Ohio Speech-Language and Hearing Association. Together, we represent the interests of more than 9,400 speech-language pathologists and 1,200 audiologists across the state of Ohio.

Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) and audiologists across Ohio serve children in public schools, early intervention programs, hospitals, and private practices. Our members work every day to ensure that Ohio's children can access communication—the foundation of literacy, academic success, and long-term workforce participation. We strongly support HB 523 because it is a strategic investment in Ohio's educator workforce. While much of the conversation has appropriately focused on classroom teachers, this legislation will also have a meaningful and immediate impact on school-based SLPs and audiologists, who are licensed educators and critical members of the educational team.

Ohio schools are facing significant shortages not only of teachers, but also of specialized instructional support personnel. According to national workforce data from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, school-based SLP shortages persist across many states, including Ohio. Audiology access in rural and Appalachian regions is particularly limited. Without adequate staffing, caseloads rise, services are delayed, compliance risks increase, and students lose critical instructional time.

In schools, SLPs and audiologists:

- Evaluate and treat speech and language disorders
- Provide services required under IDEA and IEPs
- Support literacy development and reading proficiency
- Manage hearing screenings and hearing conservation programs

- Maintain assistive hearing technology for students
- Collaborate with teachers to ensure access to curriculum

HB 523 recognizes that financial barriers are one of the most significant deterrents to entering and remaining in education-related professions. This is especially true for speech-language pathologists and audiologists, whose graduate-level training often results in substantial student loan debt. When comparing employment settings, private healthcare and medical environments frequently offer higher salaries than school districts. The Future Educators Support Act will: Reduce financial barriers for individuals pursuing educator licensure, increase the attractiveness of school-based practice, support retention of early-career professionals, and strengthen recruitment pipelines in high-need and rural districts. Financial incentives through HB 523 will help level the playing field and encourage more highly qualified professionals to choose—and remain in—school-based roles.

When schools cannot recruit or retain SLPs and audiologists, students experience delayed evaluations which can adversely affect early literacy development, reduce equitable access, and lead to costly contracted services. Additionally, understaffing issues lead to undue burdens on school-based SLP's and audiologists that lead to burnout, specifically with heavy caseload numbers and a high volume of paperwork.¹ Communication is not a supplemental service—it is the foundation for reading proficiency, classroom participation, and long-term educational outcomes. Investing in these professionals supports Ohio's broader goals around literacy, early intervention, and workforce development.

Beyond student outcomes, strengthening the pipeline for school-based SLPs and audiologists reduces contracting costs, stabilizes district budgets, improves federal IDEA mandate compliance, supports interdisciplinary collaboration, and builds sustainable service models. In many parts of Ohio, particularly Appalachian regions, recruitment challenges are compounded by geography and limited provider availability. HB 523 offers a meaningful mechanism to attract qualified professionals into these high-need communities.

We respectfully urge the committee to recognize that “educator” includes not only classroom teachers, but also licensed school-based professionals whose work enables students to access instruction. Speech-language pathologists and audiologists are:

- Licensed by the state
- Credentialed by the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce
- Essential to IDEA compliance
- Critical to literacy and language outcomes
- Key contributors to early childhood and K–12 success

By supporting HB 523, the General Assembly affirms that Ohio values the full educational team. The Future Educators Support Act is not simply a workforce bill—it is a student access bill. It strengthens Ohio's educator pipeline. It supports recruitment and retention in high-need disciplines. It promotes educational equity across rural and urban districts alike. It also ensures that children with communication needs receive timely, high-quality services.

On behalf of the Ohio Speech and Hearing Governmental Affairs Coalition, we respectfully urge favorable consideration of HB 523. Thank you for your time and your commitment to Ohio's students and we are available to answer any questions or discuss this legislation further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maggie Kettler, AuD". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Maggie Kettler, AuD
Chair, Ohio Speech and Hearing Governmental Affairs Coalition

References

1. American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2024). *2024 Schools Survey: SLP workforce and work conditions* [PDF]. <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/surveys/2024-schools-survey-slp-workforce.pdf>