REQUESTING THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION CONDUCT AN INTERIM STUDY REGARDING THE FACTORS, COSTS, AND OUTCOMES RELATED TO THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

WHEREAS, speech-language pathologists, as defined by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, are professionals who hold the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology, which requires a master’s, doctoral, or other recognized post-baccalaureate degree; and

WHEREAS, speech-language pathologists must complete a period of supervised postgraduate professional work experience and pass a rigorous national examination as described in the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association certification standards, demonstrate continued professional development as mandated for the maintenance of the Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology, and hold other required credentials, such as state licensures, teaching certifications, and specialty certifications; and

WHEREAS, the scope of practice in speech-language pathology covers several diverse domains, including without limitation issues related to:

1. Speech intelligibility;
2. Stuttering;
3. Voice and resonance; and
4. Receptive and expressive language, which includes:
   A. Literacy and written language;
   B. Hearing screening and auditory skills development;
   C. Swallowing;
   D. Cognitive aspects of communication;
   E. Social communication; and
   F. Alternative communication modalities;
WHEREAS services for these domains using service delivery models include collaboration, counseling, prevention and wellness, screening, assessment, treatment, technology, population and systems; and

WHEREAS, as of summer 2019, there are five hundred sixty-eight (568) speech-language pathologists who are certified as both speech-language pathologists and teachers working in public schools; and

WHEREAS, Medicaid funds generated by speech-language pathologists could be utilized to fund budgets to reimburse speech-language pathologists for gaining the speech-language pathologist licensure that is required to bill Medicaid or to recognize the contribution of speech-language pathologists to public schools by funding a stipend commensurate with stipends received by public school teachers who have received National Board Certifications and certified speech-language pathologists who meet certain teaching-related criteria, as described in § 6-17-413,

NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT PROPOSED BY THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION OF THE NINETY-SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

THAT the House Committee on Education study factors related to the recruitment and retention of speech-language pathologists in public schools, the positive role of highly qualified speech-language pathologists in public schools related to student development and school safety, the costs associated with attaining national certifications by speech-language pathologists, and the effect Medicaid funding billed by licensed speech-language pathologists both within public schools and those provided by contracted third-party vendors has on the budgets of public school districts in Arkansas.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Janna Della Rosa
District 90
Prepared by: TNL/TNL