PROMOTE WORKFORCE DIVERSITY IN AUDIOLOGY AND SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY

ACTION REQUESTED
Support passage of the Allied Health Workforce Diversity Act of 2021 (H.R. 3320/S. 1679), which would help increase diversity within the audiology and speech-language pathology workforce.

ISSUE: Current Workforce is not Reflective of the U.S. Population
- Overall, 8.5% of ASHA members, nonmember certificate holders, international affiliates, and associates identify as a racial minority (compared with 28% of the U.S. population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau).\(^1\)\(^2\) In addition, 6.1% identify their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino, compared with 18.4% of the U.S. population.
- For those same individuals represented by ASHA, 8% have indicated that they have the described linguistic proficiency of 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: Support Passage of H.R. 3320/S. 1679 to Promote a More Diverse Workforce, Address Provider Shortages, and Improve Outcomes
- Help increase diversity within the audiology and speech-language pathology workforce by helping underrepresented students (including racial and ethnic minorities and those with disadvantaged backgrounds) enter and complete accredited educational programs.
- 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.
- The House Energy and Commerce Committee advanced H.R. 3320 by a bipartisan vote in November 2021, and the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee included key provisions of S. 1679 to support individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds or individuals who are underrepresented in the professions of audiology or speech-language pathology in the PREVENT Pandemics Act (S. 3799), which was favorably reported by a bipartisan vote in March 2022.
- Enactment of this legislation will support prospective audiology and speech-language pathology students, address provider shortages, and improve care in underserved areas.

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