



## **H.588 Professions and occupations regulated by OPR Speech Language Pathologist Assistants Regulation**

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We are here to discuss licensure of Speech-Language Pathology Assistants (SLPAs). For over 10 years, VSHA has advocated for SLPA licensure.

Vermont faces a significant access issue with speech and language services. Shortages are especially severe in schools and rural areas. Delayed or limited services affect children's communication, literacy, and learning, and adults' independence and employment. Note that SLP shortages mean students sometimes wait or receive services less frequently than recommended.

### ***What SLPAs do***

SLPAs are trained professionals who provide direct therapy activities under the supervision of licensed SLPs. They help implement treatment plans, enabling SLPs to manage larger caseloads more effectively. They extend SLPs' reach, enabling SLPs to focus on evaluation, complex cases, and care planning. Many states safely and effectively use licensed SLPAs as part of their service-delivery models.

In school settings, an SLPA works directly with students to carry out speech and language activities designed by a licensed speech-language pathologist, supporting skills such as articulation, language comprehension, and social communication. By providing consistent, hands-on support and collaborating closely with the supervising SLP, teachers, and families, the SLPA helps ensure students receive timely, structured services that support their participation and success in the classroom.

### ***Why SLPA licensure is needed***

Licensure sets clear standards for training, supervision, and ethical practice. It increases accountability and protects the public. It helps recruit and retain qualified SLPAs, giving employers and families clarity about who is providing services.

VSHA strongly supports SLPA licensure as a practical, evidence-based workforce solution. Licensure will improve access while maintaining quality and safety.

There are approximately 19 U.S. states that have enacted formal licensure for Speech-Language Pathology Assistants, and these include states such as Arizona, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, North

Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, and several others with similar statutory frameworks for SLPA practice.

***Sunrise report in 2015***

OPR completed a Sunrise report on SLPAs in 2015. That 2015 report included analysis of risk of harm, workforce needs, and regulatory options. OPR's recommendation was ***licensure of SLPAs***.

Despite the recommendation of licensure in their Sunrise report, OPR has indicated to us that they would like to conduct a new Sunrise review before acting on SLPA licensure.

We ask that, if your committee chooses to ask OPR to do another Sunrise report, please direct OPR, in H.588, to ensure that the process builds on the work already done.

We have suggested language to include in H.588—

**Sec. XX. OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL REGULATION; SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY ASSISTANT; SUNRISE REVIEW**

(a) The Office of Professional Regulation, in consultation with Speech Language Pathologists, Speech-Language Pathology Assistants (SLPAs), Vermont-NEA, and other interested stakeholders, shall consider whether to recommend licensure of SLPAs in accordance with 26 V.S.A. chapter 57. In so doing, OPR shall take into consideration its Sunrise report completed in 2015.

(b) On or before November 15, 2026, the Office of Professional Regulation shall report its recommendations of the review required by subsection (a) of this section to the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations.

Thank you for your consideration.