

February 29, 2024

The Honorable Rhonda Baker, Chair
Committee on Common Education
Oklahoma House of Representatives
2300 N. Lincoln Blvd
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

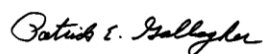
Dear Representative Baker,

On behalf of the American Academy of Audiology (the Academy), I am writing in strong support of H.B. 3951. The Academy is the world's largest professional organization of, by and for audiologists. Representing the interests of audiologists in all practice settings, the Academy is dedicated to providing quality hearing care services through professional development, education, research, and increased public awareness of hearing and balance disorders.

H.B. 3951 would require hearing screening for children at certain intervals in elementary and secondary schools and establish best practice protocols for this screening. This legislation would bring Oklahoma in line with the 70 percent of states that require hearing screening for school-aged children. School-aged hearing screening programs are critical to identify children with hearing loss who were not identified at birth, lost to follow-up or developed hearing loss after that time. Hearing deficits are one of the Health Barriers to Learning (HBLs)—health conditions that when untreated or unmanaged can interfere with a child's ability to learn and succeed in school.¹ The World Health Organization has documented that childhood hearing loss has a negative effect on language development, literacy, self-esteem and social skills. Untreated hearing loss is also associated with academic underachievement, which can lead to reduced employment opportunities later in life.²

In light of the significant benefits this legislation would provide for school-aged children by ensuring greater academic success and the state of Oklahoma by potentially reducing costly downstream interventions, the Academy urges strong support. If you have any questions about the information contained in this letter, please contact Susan Pilch, JD, at spilch@audiology.org.

Sincerely,



Patrick Gallagher, MBA, Executive Director

¹ [Missed opportunities: Do states require screening of children for health conditions that interfere with learning? - PMC \(nih.gov\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31111111/)

² https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/imported2/childhood-hearing-loss--strategies-for-prevention-and-care.pdf?sfvrsn=cbbb3cc_0