

TSHA Legislative Initiatives Update

Your TSHA Legislative Team has been working diligently this week at the Capitol, meeting with House Representatives, Senators and staff members, in order to finalize this session's legislative initiatives. We have successfully found sponsors to file three bills that directly pertain to speech-language pathologists and audiologists practicing in the state of Texas. We thank those members who are monitoring the legislative updates and encourage you to continue doing so as the legislative session heats up!

Bills filed:

- SB 1141 by Senator Van de Putte: Relating to student loan repayment assistance for speech-language pathologists or audiologists employed by a public school or as faculty members of certain graduate programs at public institutions of higher education. To view the bill in its entirety, visit: <http://www.legis.state.tx.us/tlodocs/81R/billtext/html/SB01141I.htm>
- SB 209 by Senator Shapleigh: Relating to the minimum salary schedule for certain public school employees. To view the bill in its entirety, visit: <http://www.legis.state.tx.us/tlodocs/81R/billtext/html/SB00209I.htm>
- SB 1211 by Senator Fraser: Relating to the exemption from liability of speech-language pathologists and audiologists who are volunteering professional services. To view the bill in its entirety, visit: <http://www.legis.state.tx.us/tlodocs/81R/billtext/html/SB01211I.htm>

New items on TSHA Legislative Initiatives

The TSHA Legislative initiatives are bills that TSHA is introducing during this legislative session. The status of these bills will be monitored daily by the Legislative Leadership Team, and updates on the progress of each bill will be reported to the members of TSHA weekly. TSHA is supporting legislation that will:

- Mandate all Texas High Schools to provide pre-season cognitive-communicative assessment of all athletes engaged in contact sports.
- Require health benefit issuers to provide coverage for the necessary care and treatment of loss or impairment of speech, language, or hearing problems that may not be less favorable than coverage for physical illness generally under a plan.

TSHA Legislative Agenda Updates

The House of Representatives Committee on Public Health is scheduled to hear testimony on HB 461, relating to the regulation of dyslexia practitioners and therapists, on Tuesday March 3, 2009, at 8:00 am. TSHA's stand is to support this bill, monitor any amendments, and ensure "language" specific terminology.

The House of Representatives Committee on Public Health is scheduled to hear testimony on HB 594, relating to the licensing and regulation of hearing instrument fitters and dispensers, on Tuesday March 3, 2009, at 8:00 am. TSHA's stand is to not oppose this bill while monitoring any amendments.

Here are the latest updates to bills being monitored by the TSHA Legislative Team, and the committees to which they have been referred:

- HB 315 – Relating to the instruction of American Sign Language in public high schools – ***Referred to Public Education***
- HB 451 – Relating to health benefit plan coverage for autism spectrum disorder - ***Referred to Insurance***
- HB 461 – Relating to the regulation of dyslexia practitioners and therapists - ***Referred to Public Health***
- HB 594 – Relating to the licensing and regulation of hearing instrument fitters and dispensers - ***Referred to Public Health***
- HB 952 – Relating to duty-free lunch period for public school nurses - ***Referred to Public Education***
- HB 963 – Relating to a criminal history evaluation letter determining occupational license eligibility - ***Referred to Licensing & Administrative Procedures***
- HB 975 – Relating to drug testing of professional employees of public school districts - ***Referred to Public Education***
- SB 705 – Relating to the Medicaid consolidated waiver program and other Medicaid long-term care waiver programs - ***Referred to Health & Human Services***
- SB 706 – Relating to incentives to recruit and retain allied health education program faculty - ***Referred to Higher Education***
- SB 692 – Relating to family care leave for certain employees, providing a civil penalty - ***Referred to Business & Commerce***