



LFC Requester: Montano

**PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
BILL ANALYSIS
2025 REGULAR SESSION**

SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Check all that apply:

Original Amendment
Correction Substitute

Date Prepared: 02/21 /25
Bill No: SB502

Agency Name and Code: PED - 924

Sponsor: Scott

PED Lead Analyst: -

Phone: - **Email:** -

Short Title: SPEECH-LANGUAGE
PATHOLOGIST LICENSURE

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SECTION II: FISCAL IMPACT

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY26	FY27		
None	None	N/A	NFA

REVENUE (dollars in thousands)

Estimated Revenue			Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY26	FY27	FY28		
None	None	None	N/A	NFA

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY26	FY27	FY28	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Total	None	None	None	None	N/A	NFA

Duplicates/Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act: None.

SECTION III: NARRATIVE

BILL SUMMARY

Senate Bill 502 (SB502) would amend [Section 61-14B-2 NMSA 1978](#) of the Speech-Language Pathology, Audiology and Hearing Aid Dispensing Practices Act to establish a new license for speech-language pathology assistants (SLPAs) and would eliminate the Apprentice Speech-Language Pathologist (ASL) license. It defines the scope of practice for SLPAs, allowing them to assist speech-language pathologists with administrative and clinical tasks under supervision while prohibiting them from independent diagnosis, treatment planning, or discharging patients.

The bill proposes licensure requirements, including completion of an accredited educational program, passing a national exam, and obtaining supervised clinical hours. This bill would amend [Section 61-14B-16.1 NMSA 1978](#), [Section 61-14B-19 NMSA 1978](#), and [Section 61-14B-20 NMSA 1978](#) to designate SLPAs in place of apprentices with regard to licensure. It would also establish supervision guidelines, limiting the number of SLPAs a supervisor can oversee, and would require specific training for supervisors. Additionally, SB502 would also repeal existing language related to apprenticeships in speech-language pathology in Sections 61-14B-3.1 and 61-14B-15.1 NMSA 1978.

The bill does not provide an effective date. Laws go into effect 90 days after the adjournment of the Legislature enacting them, unless a later date is specified. If enacted, this bill would become effective June 20, 2025.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

SB502 does not contain an appropriation.

Fiscal implications of this bill would involve potential costs related to the implementation of the new licensure process for SLPAs, including administrative expenses for processing applications, issuing licenses, and conducting oversight. There may also be costs associated with the training and certification of current speech-language pathologists who would serve as supervisors. However, these costs may be partially offset by license fees collected from the licensure of SLPAs (the bill proposes a fee of \$100 for the licensure of clinical fellows and SLPAs) and potential savings from streamlining regulatory processes. The bill does not specify a direct appropriation of funds, indicating that any costs would be absorbed within the existing budget of the relevant regulatory bodies.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Under the [American Speech-Language-Hearing Association \(ASHA\)](#), an SLPA is defined as “support personnel who, following academic coursework, fieldwork, and on-the-job training, perform tasks prescribed, directed, and supervised by ASHA-certified speech-language pathologists.”

The bill provides three pathways for licensure of SLPAs:

- by graduation, examination, and clinical supervision
- by active certification as an SLPA from a nationally recognized certification body such as the ASHA and a jurisprudence exam

- through expedited licensure such as when an individual is already licensed in another jurisdiction

Regulation of support personnel varies substantially across states. Presently, 15 states, including New Mexico, offer formal licensure for support personnel in speech and language pathology with New Mexico being the only one with a temporary license according to the [National Council of State Boards Examiners \(NCSB\)](#). The rest of the states rely on either formal registration or certification. Under the current system, New Mexico requires that individuals have a bachelor's degree alongside enrollment in a graduate program (or have completed graduate hours if not enrolled in a master's program) to receive the title of Apprentice in Speech-Language.

There has been a growing retention problem among speech-language pathologists nationwide for several years now, with [professionals](#) often citing work environments, limited funding, and higher caseloads as pressing issues in the profession, according to the National Library of Medicine. A [2023 study from *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*](#) found high levels of emotional stress tied to workload manageability as the primary factor behind these issues.

[ASHA conducted a survey](#) finding that 46.7 percent of facilities where speech-language pathologists are employed had funded, but unfilled, positions (this includes schools, hospitals, and residential and nonresidential healthcare facilities). This study also showed that schools have remained the largest employers of pathologists year over year, accounting for a stable 50 percent of filled positions. Overall, ASHA has identified critical shortages of speech-language pathologists in all regions of the country, particularly in school settings.

One way of addressing this issue has been the creation of the [Audiology & Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact \(ASLP-IC\)](#) which allows professionals to practice in multiple states without having to obtain additional state licenses. Under the ASLP-IC, audiologists and speech-language pathologists who are licensed in good standing in a compact member state will be eligible to practice in other compact member states via a "compact privilege," which is equivalent to a license with this compact extending to SLPAs. There are currently [34 states and one territory](#) participating in the ASLP compact. There are eight additional states with pending legislation to join, including New Mexico. Neighboring states included in this compact include Colorado, Utah, and Oklahoma, with both Arizona and Nevada currently considering legislation to join.

There is a lack of clear definitions and guidelines regarding the specific responsibilities and scope of practice for SLPAs within the bill. Without detailed standards, there could be confusion about the roles and limitations of SLPAs in various settings, potentially leading to inconsistent practices. The bill's reliance on the supervisory role of licensed speech-language pathologists could raise concerns about ensuring sufficient supervision and training, especially in areas with fewer qualified professionals. While SB502 may expand speech-language services in healthcare facilities and rural areas by establishing a standardized licensing pathway for SLPAs, the requirement of direct supervision of assistants by fully qualified and licensed pathologists may make their employment in schools less likely. Currently, PED licenses 56 speech-language pathology apprentices, 12 of whom have advanced to clinical fellowship. Unlike the proposed speech-language pathology assistant, the apprentice has no requirement of "direct contact" with a fully license speech language pathologist. It is uncertain from the provisions of the bill what will

happen to those who currently hold licensure as an apprentice if the bill is enacted and strikes reference to their licensure.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

None.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

The administrative implications of this bill include the need for state and local agencies to implement and enforce new regulations regarding the use of SLPAs. This may require updates to licensing processes, the creation of new training programs, and increased monitoring to ensure compliance with supervisory requirements. PED would need to amend [6.63.3 NMAC, Licensure for Instructional Support Providers Pre K-12 Not Covered in Other Rules](#), if the bill is amended to provide for licensure of speech-language pathology assistants and clinical fellows

Additionally, schools and healthcare facilities may need to adjust their staffing models and resource allocation to integrate SLPAs effectively. This could result in increased administrative costs and the need for ongoing oversight to ensure that the bill's provisions are being met consistently.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

Relates to House Bill 79 and Senate Bill 104, which both propose to enter New Mexico into the Audiology and Speech Language Pathology Interstate Compact recognizing interstate licenses.

Duplicates House Bill 180, which proposes establishing a new license for SLPAs.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

The Public School Code provides for licensure of speech-language pathologists (SLPAs) in the public schools in the School Personnel Act, which includes speech-language pathologists in the definition of "instructional support provider," and offers licensure as such in Section 22-10A-17 NMSA 1978, and offers an alternative Level Three-B license for these pathologists in Section 22-10A-17.2 NMSA 1978. Those sections include neither speech pathology apprentices nor the proposed speech-language pathology assistants. It would be helpful to the Public Education Department (PED) if the sponsors considered also amending Section 22-10A-17 of the School Personnel Act to add speech-pathology assistants and speech-pathology clinical fellows to the list of instructional support providers, so that PED may provide for their licensure for their direct service in the public schools.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

None.

ALTERNATIVES

None.

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

None.

AMENDMENTS

The sponsor may wish to consider amending Section 22-10A-17 of the School Personnel Act to provide for PED licensure of speech-pathology apprentices and clinical fellows for direct service in public schools.