



A Year of Success for NJSHA

NJSHA's Legislative Committee, chaired by immediate past-president Robynne Kratchman, works hand-in-hand with our governmental affairs consultants, **Lynn Nowak** and **Jacy Lance** at Porzio Governmental Affairs. NJSHA tracked 328 bills introduced and moving through the legislative process in 2021. Below is a brief outline of successes that NJSHA achieved in the past year.

REGULATIONS FOR SINGLE LICENSURE FOR AUDIOLOGISTS FINALIZED

- After the law being signed in March of 2019, the formal adoption of the rule that allows audiologists to dispense hearing aids by virtue of their audiology license was published in the NJ Register on **May 17, 2021** – a final punctuation mark (an exclamation point to be sure) of this 10-year effort.

EXTRA YEAR FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

- Students turning 21 during the 2020-2021, 2021-2022 or 2022-2023 school years will be eligible to continue receiving services for an extra year.
- Students will be protected from “aging out” of eligibility when they turn 21 and will continue to receive schooling and services in the year when they reach the age of 22.
- NJSHA sent a letter to Governor Murphy, encouraging him to sign the legislation.
- **P.L.2021, c.109. Signed on June 16, 2021**

VIRTUAL RELATED SERVICES IN SCHOOLS

- In April 2020, the State Board of Education approved a waiver to allow special education instruction and related services to be provided virtually due to the pandemic.
- In the Summer of 2021, Governor Murphy announced that all schools and children would return to full-time, in-person instruction. The State Board terminated the waiver allowing for special education instruction to be conducted virtually but decided that **related services could continue to be provided virtually until January 11, 2022.**
- The Department of Education also planned to pursue amendments to the Administrative Code to make **permanent** certain provisions allowing related services to be provided through electronic communications or virtual or other remote platforms.
- NJSHA acted quickly and decisively, sending a letter to each Board Member, Department Staff and the Acting Commissioner, sharing concerns about virtual provision of related services, and engaging with various education and disability-rights advocacy groups such as ABCD, SPAN, ELC and NJEA, providing copies of the letters written to the State Board, and encouraging them to take similar action.
- **On December 3, 2021**, the Commissioner's Office indicated that the NJ Department of Education and the State Board of Education are not pursuing these amendments at this time.

PAYMENT PARITY FOR TELEMEDICINE SERVICES

- This bill went through four committee hearings and five revisions over the course of the 18 months it was under consideration in the Legislature (June 2020 – December 2021).
- NJSHA provided public testimony and private input directly to the sponsors regarding the importance of payment parity at every step of the way.
- Our comments and feedback were actively sought by the sponsors throughout the entire legislative process.
- The bill extends the current payment parity structure through the end of 2023 (a full two years), and requires a study conducted by the Health Department to assess coverage and payment for healthcare services delivered through telemedicine.
- **P.L.2021, c.310 signed December 21, 2021.**

REGIONALIZATION

- This bill provides financial incentives for school district regionalization, and establishes a grant program for reimbursing regionalization feasibility studies which are conducted by school districts and municipalities.
- Led by SAC members Sue Goldman and Robin Kanis, NJSHA sent a detailed letter of support to the bill's prime sponsor, Senate President Steve Sweeney, as well as to key Senate staff working on the bill, and NJSHA support was registered for the bill in the Assembly.
- **P.L.2021, c.402. Signed on January 18, 2022**

RETIRED TEACHERS AND PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBER RE-EMPLOYMENT

- When introduced in April 2021, this bill only applied to retired teachers. SAC felt strongly that the bill should be expanded to include all professionals who are TPAF enrollees, including SLs.
- NJSHA's advocacy in both the Senate and the Assembly resulted in the inclusion

of new language specifically, **“a professional staff member providing special services, including but not limited to a speech-language specialist or a therapist.”**

- **P.L.2021, c.408, Signed on January 18, 2022.**

NJSHA-MEMBER APPOINTMENTS

- NJSHA recommended FOUR new individuals for appointment to the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Advisory Committee and ONE individual for re-appointment.
- **All NJSHA nominations were accepted by Governor Murphy's Appointments Office:**
 - **Janet Koehnke, PhD, CCC-A**
Audiologist, Reappointment
 - **Kristen Victorino, PhD, CCC-SLP**
Speech-Language Pathologist
 - **Mary Anne Ferraioli, MS, CCC-SLP**
Speech-Language Pathologist
 - **Al Faella**
Public Member
 - **Didier Peron, MD, FACS**
Board of Otolaryngology



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