

EHDI Reauthorization Takes First Step; Help Keep the Bill Moving

This morning, April 26, legislation to reauthorize the federal portion of newborn infant hearing screening programs in all 50 states for the next five years, was passed out of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and now awaits scheduling for a vote before the full Senate. The leading Senate sponsors of the bill, the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Act of 2017 (S. 652), are Senators Rob Portman (R-OH) and Tim Kaine (D-VA). It now needs to be brought up for a full vote in the U.S. Senate in order to advance the program's reauthorization.

Please [Take Action NOW](#), and urge your Senators to ask for a full vote in the Senate as soon as possible.

While this first step is welcome, no one can guarantee the program will continue until it passes the both chambers of Congress. This is a non-controversial program and has both Republican and Democratic support.

Although great strides have been made, significant work remains to be done to ensure that newborns with hearing loss receive timely and appropriate services. Continued federal funding is necessary to ensure that state EHDI programs become fully operational and successful, and that they properly link screening programs with diagnosis and early intervention.

EHDI reauthorization legislation passed the House in September 2015. It was introduced in the Senate in December 2015, but due to the compact legislative calendar and busy political cycle, it was unable to come up for a vote in the Senate. An official appropriation has been made for the program, despite it not being reauthorized; however, reauthorization needs to occur as soon as possible to guarantee the program continues.

Background

EHDI grants were first authorized in the Newborn Infant Hearing Screening and Intervention Act of 1999, which was incorporated into the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2000, and signed into law. That law provided federal funds for state grants to develop infant hearing screening and intervention programs. The following year, Congress reauthorized these grants through the Children's Health Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-310), and included provisions related to early hearing screening and evaluation of all newborns, coordinated intervention, rehabilitation services, and research. In 2010, Congress passed the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Act of 2010, which authorized these programs through 2015.

ASHA Resources

For more information, please contact Sam Hewitt, ASHA's director of congressional advocacy, at shewitt@asha.org or 202-624-5961.