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Montana Speech · Language · Hearing Association

...Improving communication for life

S 192 "Amend Freedom of Choice for Practitioners"

The Montana Speech-Language Hearing Association endorses SB 192. We are an organization of professionally trained and Montana licensed Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists working in hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, neonatal care units, schools and private practices across Montana. We provide reliable, evidence-based and client centered services to individuals throughout their lifespan. We are dedicated to improving the quality of life for Montanans by improving communication skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) including accent reduction and swallowing.

SB 192 would allow for speech-language pathologists and audiologists to be included on the list of practitioners among whom the insured have full freedom of choice. Like physical therapists, who were added in to this list in 2001, speech-language pathologists and audiologists evaluate clients for habilitative and rehabilitative services. In order to provide proper diagnosis and treatment, a portion of an evaluation involves investigation and treatment planning. Inclusion on this list would offer speech-language pathologists and audiologists the opportunity to bill for evaluation and management codes. MCA 33-22-111 is called the Freedom of Choice. Including speech-language pathologists and audiologists would give Montanans the ability to choose our professions as health care providers and receive coverage from their insurance as they would with the other listed practitioners. In rural areas, hospitals and health care facilities need to be reimbursed for the time their speech-language pathologists and audiologists actually spend working on a client's case. Coverage for services influences a facilities ability to keep professionals on staff and make those services available in that rural area. Please vote for a 'do pass' for SB 192.

Respectively submitted by

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