



Our Mission: To advance access to the gift of hearing provided by cochlear implantation through research, advocacy and awareness.

May 27, 2025

North Carolina General Assembly
Legislative Building
16 West Jones Street
Raleigh, NC 27601

Dear Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees,

I am writing on behalf of the membership of American Cochlear Implant Alliance—a non-profit organization of parents of children with hearing loss, adults with hearing loss, cochlear implant clinicians, and educators of children who are deaf and hard of hearing. We have many members in North Carolina.

We are concerned about a significant change in the House version of S. 257 impacting the Early Learning Sensory Support Program for Children Who Are Deaf/Hard of Hearing (ELSSP). I write asking for Section 7.61(c) and (d) be removed and that the ELSSP remain solely under the Department of Public Instruction. Such a move would go against the recommendations by the Governor's Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

North Carolina is world renowned for its state EHDI program and support of children with hearing and vision loss. In fact, the ELSSP is the only program of its kind in the United States. We understand the intention of the language was to provide clarification, but as written, it will have serious unintended consequences. Moving ELSSP to three different schools (School for the Blind and two different Schools for the Deaf) will split up administrative oversight and staff. Keeping a centralized office is the most efficient way of providing these critical services. In addition, due to how it currently operates, ELSSP can provide its service at no cost to participating families. The proposed move will likely change its structure, placing the financial burden on families receiving services. If changes need to occur, we request that they happen after further study of the implications are completed.

We respectfully ask that Section 7.61(c) and (d) of the Budget Bill be removed to avoid negative impacts and to ensure that the state continues to provide options for families and life-long opportunities for children.

Sincerely,

Donna Sorkin MA
Executive Director
American Cochlear Implant Alliance

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