



**AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
OTOLARYNGOLOGY–
HEAD AND NECK SURGERY**

March 11, 2015

The Honorable Gus Bilirakis
U.S. House of Representatives
2112 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Bilirakis:

On behalf of the approximately 12,000 members of the American Academy of Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery (AAO-HNS), thank you for your continued interest in, and understanding of, the nuances associated with hearing healthcare services. As the national medical association of physicians dedicated to the care of patients with disorders of the ears, nose, throat (ENT), and related structures of the head and neck, our members provide hearing-impaired patients with a full medical evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment for their hearing disorders.

As healthcare reform-related efforts continue to evolve, it's clear that providing a pathway for strong and efficient team-based care remains a tenet for all future healthcare delivery systems. The AAO-HNS supports the professional skill and training of our audiology colleagues and strongly believes a physician-led hearing healthcare team with coordination of services is the best approach for providing the highest quality care to patients.

Your legislation, H.R. 1116, the Medicare Audiology Services Enhancement Act of 2015, appropriately strengthens the structure for hearing healthcare services in the United States by better aligning Medicare coverage of comprehensive audiology services with current billing and reimbursement standards of other non-physician therapeutic services covered by Medicare (PT, OT, SLP).

The AAO-HNS applauds and joins you in your recognition that patients are best served within a collaborative team-based setting and appreciates the inclusion of the following provisions in H.R. 1116:

- Retention of physician referral requirements;
- Recognition that physician oversight of care plans is a critical aspect of quality hearing healthcare services; and
- Reiteration that the audiology services outlined in the bill adhere to existing scope-of-practice requirements as defined in each state.

In appreciation of your sensible approach to expanding audiology services, the AAO-HNS is pleased to again offer its support of H.R. 1116. The AAO-HNS and some

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sub-sets of the audiology community have often had conflicting approaches regarding efforts to increase and/or strengthen audiology services within the Medicare program. We believe your legislation achieves the goal of appropriately expanding audiology services while still ensuring the highest patient safety standards are preserved. H.R. 1116 represents a true collaboration between physicians (the AAO-HNS) and audiologists (the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association – ASHA).

The AAO-HNS applauds your leadership on this issue and looks forward to working with you to ensure quality, and efficient, hearing healthcare services are readily available to the nation's senior population. If you and your staff have any questions, please contact Megan Marcinko, Senior Manager for Congressional and Political Affairs, at 703-535-3796 or mmarcinko@entnet.org.

Sincerely,

James C. Denny, III, MD
Executive Vice President and CEO