

STATE-MENT

MONTHLY STATE TRACKER UPDATE

JUNE 2019

State Advocacy, Status Update

- This year, out of the 2,110 bills the AAO-HNS State Trackers and the Academy have reviewed, 332 fell into the category of Hearing Services. Within this category, and of particular interest to deaf or HH patients and the profession, has been the legislative proposals to require health insurance coverage of hearing aids. Thus far, there have been 39 bills proposed in 20 states. Many of these bills include only audiologists and/or hearing aid dispensers for hearing assessments and for the fitting, service, and sale of hearing aids. The Academy, in conjunction with the State Trackers, the state otolaryngology societies, and the state medical associations continue to advocate for otolaryngologists to be included via amendments to the legislation.

Status Update

- **Nebraska:** [LB 15](#), the Children of Nebraska Hearing Aid Act legislation, was successfully amended to include otolaryngologists for diagnosis and medical clearance. On May 29, supported by advocacy action from the Academy, the members of the NE Academy of Otolaryngology-HNS, the NE Medical Association, and testimony by a State Tracker, Governor Pete Ricketts signed the bill into law! Advocacy Works!
- **Missouri:** [SB 101](#) establishes a statewide hearing aid program with all assessments to be performed by audiologists/hearing instrument specialists. Through the efforts of the Academy and the MO State Medical Association, the bill was successfully amended to include physicians. This effective legislation has made its way through the legislature and currently awaits the Governor's signature.
- **Florida:** [SB 572/ HB 531](#), Coverage for Hearing Aids for Children legislation which had not been amended, was stopped in the Appropriations Committee. Advocates will work over the next several months to draft an inclusive, new bill to be introduced in the 2020 session.
- **South Carolina:** [HB 3284](#), Hearing Aid Coverage for Children Act remains in the Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee, and will be carried over to the 2020 legislative session. During the summer break, advocates will work with the bill sponsor to seek necessary changes.
- **Ohio:** [HB 243](#), a bill to require coverage for hearing aids for persons under 22 years of age, that does not include otolaryngologists, has recently been introduced and is being reviewed by the State Trackers and the leaders of the OH OTO societies for potential advocacy action.

Tracker Monthly Calls:

Thank you to all our State Trackers who were able to participate in our conference calls during the height of the legislative sessions. We have collectively decided to suspend our monthly calls until December when we will be preparing for the 2020 sessions.

2019 State Legislative Sessions

- Fourteen states adjourned in May.
- Nine states will adjourn in June: Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Louisiana, Maine, Nevada, New Hampshire, Oregon, and Rhode Island.
- North Carolina will complete its session in July; California in November.
- The remaining seven states are typically year-round legislatures: Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

Recruiting State Trackers

- Looking for volunteers for Nevada, South Dakota, and Rhode Island.

Email legstate@entnet.org

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- **Virginia:** CMV screening bill, [HB 2026](#), initiated by AAO-HNS member advocates and supported through a collaborative effort, enjoyed a resounding success and was signed by the Governor on March 18, 2019.
- **Michigan:** [HB 4698](#), a CMV education bill was recently introduced. ENT advocates are reviewing for possible advocacy action.
- **Pennsylvania:** [HB 1220](#), also a CMV bill, calls for cytomegalovirus education and newborn testing after the newborn fails the hearing screening test. A recent introduction, it, too, is being reviewed for advocacy action.
- **Hawaii:** [HB 678 HD 1](#) contained new language within the newborn screening statute that inappropriately broadened the definition and scope of practice for audiologists in Hawaii. As a result of AAO-HNS testimony, the Hawaii Department of Health agreed to support an amendment to the audiologist definition. The bill passed through the Senate as amended, but the House disagreed with the amendment. The bill is currently stalled, but may be carried over to the next legislative session.
- **LEAD-K bills:** The year began with 14 bills in play. Efforts by the Parents Choice Coalition, of which AAO-HNS is a member, has, to this point, seen mixed results. Many of the bills have been stopped. However, [HB 1484](#) became law in Indiana while [SB 203](#) has passed the House and Senate in Nevada, and has been sent to the Governor. In New Jersey, [SB 2045](#) has been set for a hearing in June and Massachusetts' [H 3550](#) will face a hearing on July 23. Virginia's [SB 1741](#), was referred to the Joint Health Care Commission for review. It now has a series of work group meetings that are being held throughout the summer.

It's Not Over Until It's Over

- Advocates need to remain vigilant. Twenty-five states will be carrying over legislation from 2019 to 2020. As a result, advocates in many states will see stalled legislation come back to life again. In those states, now is the time to initiate meetings with sponsors and have those frank discussions in preparation for the next session. In states that start anew in 2020, be on the look out for pre-filed legislation...working together, we can succeed!