



Dear ENT Advocacy Network Member:

December 13, 2019

Legislative and political activity directly affects our practices and our patients. As a leading advocate for otolaryngology-head and neck surgery, we hope you enjoy reading this edition of The ENT Advocate, your premier source of advocacy information for the specialty!

## Lead Story

### AAO-HNS Stands Ready to Continue the Fight Against Audiology Direct Access in 2020

As reported in the November edition of *The ENT Advocate*, AAO-HNS advocacy staff and physician leaders have been actively participating in discussions with the House committees of jurisdiction and House leadership regarding opposition to the [amended version of H.R. 4618](#). The legislation seeks to provide Medicare coverage for hearing aids in certain patient populations as well as grant audiologists the ability to **treat** Medicare beneficiaries. AAO-HNS submitted technical amendments to the committees to appropriately define treatment services that audiologists would be allowed to perform under Medicare, as well as include patient safety and quality among the issues to be studied on audiology Medicare direct access.

On December 12, 2019, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 3, the "[Elijah E. Cummings Lower Drug Costs Now Act](#)". HR 3 enrolled language to expand the Medicare hearing health benefit to cover hearing aids for individuals with profound to severe hearing loss beginning in 2024. The legislation also includes language that would label audiologists as practitioners and grants them the ability to provide unlimited treatment to Medicare beneficiaries. The AAO-HNS **strongly opposed** these misguided audiology policy provisions. Despite this opposition, H.R. 3 passed the U.S. House of Representatives on a party-line vote. The U.S. Senate will be taking up this bill in the near future. AAO-HNS will continue to fiercely oppose legislation in 2020 that would remove the physician referral requirement for audiologists and potentially place patients at risk. Our fight now turns to the Senate and we need your help!

## Legislative & Political Reports

### AAO-HNS Participates in Stakeholder Meeting with New NIDCD Director

On December 10, James C. Denny III, MD, AAO-HNS EVP/CEO, [represented the specialty at a Friends of the Congressional Hearing Health Caucus meeting](#) with Debara L. Tucci, MD, MS, MBA. The AAO-HNS presented our top hearing health clinical research priorities to Dr. Tucci, a longtime Academy member who assumed the role of Director of the NIH's National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) in May of this year.

### AAO-HNS Releases Three Position Statements

Following an in-depth review by multiple AAO-HNS committees and the Physician Payment Policy (3P) Workgroup, the Executive Committee approved [two revised and one new position statement](#). The new position statement addresses the use of e-cigarettes. The two revised statements are on Hypoglossal Nerve

Stimulation for Treatment of Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) and the Use of Oral Appliances for the Treatment of Obstructive Sleep Apnea. The three new statements, and their references, are available on the Academy's website.

## Action Requested

### First State Trackers Call is December 18, 2019

The first nationwide conference call with our volunteer State Trackers will be held on December 18 to discuss the upcoming 2020 sessions. The AAO-HNS State Tracker program has grown to include more than 170 volunteers covering 48 states. However, **more Trackers are needed**, especially in Nevada and South Dakota. Previous experience with state legislation is not required! The Academy's Advocacy team can work with you and your state society to ensure issues affecting ENT patients and your profession are heard by the state legislatures. Contact [legstate@entnet.org](mailto:legstate@entnet.org) to sign up or learn more!

### 2020 Health Policy Scholarship Application- Apply Now!

The application period is now open for the annual Brandeis American College of Surgeons-AAO-HNS Health Policy Scholarship. This scholarship award subsidizes participation in the June 2020 Executive Leadership Program in Health Policy and Management at Brandeis University. Surgeons who are members in good standing of both the AAO-HNS and the ACS are encouraged to [apply by February 3, 2020](#).

### ENT PAC "First 50" Campaign Kicks Off January 1, 2020!

Don't miss the start of ENT PAC's annual "First 50" campaign! The "First 50" campaign is a fundraising effort to garner at least 50 contributions of \$1,000+ (Chairman's Club or Leadership Club) during the month of January. "First 50" investors will have exclusive access to a 2020 conference call series with high-ranking individuals from Congress and the Administration. If you have questions or would like additional information, visit [www.entpac.org](http://www.entpac.org) or contact ENT PAC staff at [entpac@entnet.org](mailto:entpac@entnet.org).\*

### AAO-HNS Needs Your Support! Say No to S. 2446

Now, more than ever, **the AAO-HNS needs your support**. Legislation has been introduced (S. 2446/H.R. 4056) that seeks to designate audiologists as "practitioners" and allow them direct access to Medicare beneficiaries without a physician referral.

Your voice is needed to amplify our efforts on Capitol Hill and ensure your patients continue to receive the highest quality care. Please click [here](#) to access the action alert on the AAO-HNS Advocacy website, [www.entadvocacy.org](http://www.entadvocacy.org). The alert includes a sample letter you can use to make your voice heard and stop this misguided legislation from advancing in Congress. With your support, we can make a difference and tell Congress to say no to S. 2446/H.R. 4056 "The Medicare Audiologist access and Services Act of 2019".

Sincerely,

David Boisoneau, MD  
BOG Legislative Affairs Committee Chair  
and the AAO-HNS Advocacy Team

For more information, contact [govtaffairs@entnet.org](mailto:govtaffairs@entnet.org). Don't forget to bookmark [The ENT Advocate!](#)

If you no longer wish to receive important legislative and political updates via *The ENT Advocate*, please reply to this email with CANCEL ADVOCATE in the subject line.

\*Contributions to ENT PAC are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. Contributions are voluntary, and all members of the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery have the right to refuse to contribute without reprisal. Federal law prohibits ENT PAC from accepting contributions from foreign nationals. By law, if your contributions are made using a personal check or credit card, ENT PAC may use your contribution only to support candidates in federal elections. All corporate contributions to ENT PAC will be used for educational and administrative fees of ENT PAC, and other activities permissible under federal law. Federal law requires ENT PAC to use its best efforts to collect and report the name, mailing address, occupation, and the name of the employer of individuals whose contributions exceed \$200 in a calendar year.

American Academy of Otolaryngology — Head and Neck Surgery  
1650 Diagonal Road, Alexandria, VA 22314-2857  
Phone: 1-703-836-8444 | Fax: 1-703-683-5100