



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
OTOLARYNGOLOGY-
HEAD AND NECK SURGERY

Ensuring Patient Safety for Hearing Healthcare

The AAO-HNS recognizes that a physician-led hearing healthcare team, with coordination of services, is the best approach for providing the highest quality care to patients. Unfortunately, the audiology community continues to pursue legislation that would undermine the overall hearing healthcare team by removing existing physician referral requirements and granting audiologists “direct access” to Medicare beneficiaries.

House: Representatives Tom Rice (R-SC) and Matt Cartwright (D-PA) introduced the *Medicare Audiologist Access and Services Act of 2021* (H.R. 1587) on March 3, 2021.

Senate: Senators Rand Paul (R-KY) and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) introduced the *Medicare Audiologist Access and Services Act of 2021* (S. 1731) on May 20, 2021.

This legislation would inappropriately grant audiologists unlimited direct access to Medicare patients without a physician referral.

This bill is opposed by 110 national, state, and local medical organizations. The AAO-HNS led coalition letters publicly expressing joint opposition to the leadership of the relevant committees in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. If enacted, this bill would:

- Designate audiologists as “practitioners” under Medicare.
- Allow audiologists direct access to Medicare beneficiaries without the current patient protections that require a physician referral.

Hearing and balance disorders are medical conditions that require a full patient history and physical examination by an MD/DO. While audiologists are valued health professionals who work for and with physicians, they do not possess the medical training necessary to perform the same functions as physicians, nor are they able to provide patients with the medical diagnosis and treatment options they deserve.

Congressional Ask

Please do not co-sponsor or support legislation that would allow audiologists “direct access” to Medicare beneficiaries, including H.R. 1587 and S. 1731.