



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF OTOLARYNGOLOGY- HEAD AND NECK SURGERY®

2026 AAO-HNS State Priority Issues

Scope of Practice: Ensuring Physician Led Care

While it is reasonable for nonphysician providers to seek updates to their statutes and regulations, AAO-HNS strongly believes that a coordinated, physician-led hearing healthcare team provides the highest quality care. We oppose legislation that would inappropriately expand the scope of practice of nonphysician providers beyond their education and training, particularly proposals allowing independent diagnosis, treatment, or management of medical disorders, which can threaten patient safety. ***AAO-HNS actively monitors proposed scope expansions in state legislatures and works with state societies to amend or stop measures that could undermine physician oversight.***

Hearing Aid Services: Expanding Access Responsibly

AAO-HNS tracks and advocates on legislation addressing hearing aid coverage, dispensing, insurance mandates, and tax incentives. Each proposal is evaluated individually to ensure patients have safe, effective, and accessible hearing care while maintaining physician oversight. ***Our advocacy ensures that new programs or mandates improve patient access without compromising quality or bypassing essential physician involvement.***

Infant Newborn Screening for Cytomegalovirus (cCMV): Early Detection Saves Hearing

An estimated one in every 200 infants are born with cCMV, which can lead to sensorineural hearing loss. Early detection within the first month of life is critical for timely intervention, language development, and long-term outcomes. AAO-HNS supports universal screening and prevention education for pregnant women and families. ***The Academy engages with legislators and state health departments to expand newborn cCMV testing programs and improve follow-up care for affected infants.***

Prior Authorization: Reducing Barriers to Patient Care

Insurers increasingly require prior authorization for routine procedures, imaging, medications, and minor surgeries. This process consumes significant physician and staff time, creating delays in medically necessary care. AAO-HNS advocates for reforms to streamline PA requirements and ensure patients receive timely, appropriate treatment. ***By promoting evidence-based, standardized PA protocols, AAO-HNS helps reduce administrative burden and improve continuity of care.***

Medical Liability Reform

Each year, numerous states consider various tort reform measures, including those related to affidavits of merit, alternative reforms, caps on non-economic damages, defensive medicine issues, expert witnesses, health courts, and/or pre-trial screening panels. The AAO-HNS strongly supports comprehensive medical liability reforms to stabilize and reduce professional liability premiums, ensure continued patient access to care, and eliminate frivolous lawsuits. ***Through active engagement with state lawmakers, the Academy promotes reforms that balance accountability with practical protections for physicians and patients alike.***