

February 11, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Finance
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Finance
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leaders,

We are writing in strong opposition to legislation (S. 2446) introduced in the U.S. Senate that would inappropriately provide audiologists with unlimited direct access to Medicare patients without a physician referral and amend Title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide “practitioner” status for audiologists under the Medicare program. The undersigned groups strongly urge you to oppose S. 2446.

Through your leadership in the United States Senate, we know you work tirelessly to protect patient safety and provide the highest quality healthcare for Medicare beneficiaries. While audiologists are valued health professionals who work for and with physicians, they do not possess the medical training necessary to perform the same duties as physicians, nor are they able to provide patients with the medical diagnosis and treatment options they require.

Bypassing a physician evaluation and referral can lead to missed diagnoses and inappropriate treatment that could cause lasting, and expensive, harm to patients. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has maintained a position that physician referral is a “key means by which the Medicare program assures that beneficiaries are receiving medically necessary services, and avoids potential payment for asymptomatic screening tests that are not covered by Medicare...”

Audiologists are not physicians and should not be treated as such under the Medicare program. With the FDA’s imminent release of regulations regarding the sale of over the counter hearing aids for mild to moderate hearing loss, the established care continuum for hearing health is poised to change significantly for America’s seniors. Notwithstanding the patient safety concerns associated with direct access, S. 2446 will create confusion regarding the qualifications and training of various healthcare providers.

For the above-stated reasons, we respectfully urge you to oppose any efforts to advance S. 2446. Thank you for your consideration, and please contact the American Academy of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery at govtaffairs@entnet.org with any questions.

National Organizations

Administrator Support Community for ENT
American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Otolaryngic Allergy
American Academy of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons
American College of Rheumatology
American College of Surgeons
American Laryngological Association
American Medical Association
American Neurotology Society
American Osteopathic Association
American Osteopathic Colleges of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
American Otological Society
American Psychiatric Association
American Rhinologic Society
American Society of Anesthesiologists
American Society of Breast Surgeons
American Society of Geriatric Otolaryngology
American Society of Pediatric Otolaryngology
American Society of Plastic Surgeons
Association of Academic Departments of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
National Association of Spine Specialists
Harry Barnes Society

State and Local Medical Associations

Alaska State Medical Association
Arizona Medical Association
Arkansas Medical Society
California Medical Association
Colorado Medical Society
Connecticut State Medical Society
Florida Medical Association
Hawaii Medical Association
Indiana State Medical Association
Kansas Medical Society
Kentucky Medical Association
Louisiana State Medical Society
MedChi, Maryland State Medical Society
Medical Society of Delaware

Medical Society of the District of Columbia
Medical Association of Georgia
Medical Association of the State of Alabama
Medical Society of the State of New York
Medical Society of Virginia
Michigan State Medical Society
Minnesota Medical Association
Mississippi State Medical Association
New Hampshire Medical Society
New Mexico Medical Society
North Dakota Medical Association
Ohio State Medical Association
Pennsylvania Medical Society
South Carolina Medical Association
South Dakota State Medical Association
Tennessee Medical Association
Texas Medical Association
Utah Medical Association
Vermont Medical Society
Wyoming Medical Society
Washington State Medical Association
West Virginia State Medical Association

State and Local Specialty Societies

Alabama Society of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
Arizona Society of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery
Arkansas Society of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
Buffalo Otolaryngology Society
California Otolaryngology Society
Charleston ENT and Allergy
Chicago Laryngological and Otological Society
Cincinnati ENT Society
Colorado Ear Nose and Throat Society
Connecticut ENT Society
Delaware Academy of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
East Tennessee Otolaryngology Society
Florida Society of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
Florida Society of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery
Georgia Society of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
Greater Miami ENT Society
Houston Society of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
Indiana Society of Otorhinolaryngology
Iowa Academy of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
Kansas Society of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
Long Island Society of Otolaryngology
Louisiana Academy of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery

Maine Ear, Nose and Throat Society
Maryland Society of Otolaryngology
Massachusetts Society of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
Memphis Society of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
Metro Atlanta Educational Society for Otolaryngology- Head & Neck Surgery
Michigan Otolaryngological Society
Minnesota Academy of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
Mississippi Society of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
Missouri Society of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
Nebraska Academy of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
New Mexico Society of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
New York Laryngological Society
New York Otologic Society
New York State Society of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
North Carolina Society of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery
Northwest Academy of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
Orange County Society of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
Oregon Academy of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
Otolaryngology and Allergy Specialists- Integrated Solutions
Pennsylvania Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery
Puerto Rico Society of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
San Diego Academy of Otolaryngology
San Francisco Bay Area ENT Society
Santa Barbara Otolaryngology Society
South Carolina Society of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
South Carolina Ear Nose and Throat Allergy & Sleep Medicine
Texas Association of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
Tidewater Otolaryngology Society
Utah Society of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
Vermont Otolaryngology Society
Virginia Society of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
Washington Metropolitan Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
Wisconsin Society of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery

Cc: U.S. Senate