

July 19, 2017

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman, Energy & Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member, Energy & Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael Burgess, MD
Chairman, Energy & Commerce Health Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gene Green
Ranking Member, Energy & Commerce Health Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin Brady
Chairman, Ways & Means Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Neal
Ranking Member, Ways & Means Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Pat Tiberi
Chairman, Ways & Means Health Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sander Levin
Ranking Member, Ways & Means Health Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Committee Leaders:

In May, legislation (H.R. 2276) was reintroduced in the U.S. House of Representatives 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 include audiologists in the definition of “physician.” **The undersigned groups strongly urge you to oppose H.R. 2276.**

As a legislator, we know you share a physician’s commitment to promoting patient safety and the highest quality healthcare. 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. And, *most* audiologists practice in the same areas as MD/DO physicians. So, claims that expanding the services provided by audiologists will somehow mitigate projected MD/DO physician shortages are often unsubstantiated.

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”

Notwithstanding the patient safety concerns associated with direct access, the inclusion of audiologists in Medicare’s definition of “physician” will create confusion regarding the qualifications and training of various healthcare providers. And, broadening the term “physician” to include non-physician healthcare providers encroaches on the expert status achieved by MD/DO physicians. Audiologists are not physicians and should not be considered as such under the Medicare program.

For the above-stated reasons, **we respectfully urge you to oppose any efforts to advance H.R. 2276.** Thank you for your consideration, and please contact the American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery at legfederal@entnet.org with any questions.

National Organizations

American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
American Academy of Neurology

American Academy of Ophthalmology
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 Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American Broncho-Esophagological Association
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 Cataract and Refractive Surgery
American Society of Geriatric Otolaryngology
American Society of Pediatric Otolaryngology
American Society of Plastic Surgeons
Association of Otolaryngology Administrators
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
National Association of Spine Specialists
Renal Physicians Association
Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions

State and Local Medical Associations

Arizona Medical Association
Arkansas Medical Society
California Medical Association
Colorado Medical Society
Connecticut State Medical Society
Hawaii Medical Association
Idaho Medical Association
Illinois State Medical Society
Indiana State Medical Association
Iowa Academy of Otolaryngology
Kansas Medical Society
Kentucky Medical Association
Louisiana State Medical Society
Maine Medical Association
Massachusetts Medical Society
MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society
Medical Association of Georgia
Medical Association of the State of Alabama
Medical Society of Delaware
Medical Society of the District of Columbia
Medical Society of New Jersey
Medical Society of the State of New York
Medical Society of Virginia
Michigan State Medical Society

Minnesota Medical Association
Mississippi State Medical Association
Missouri State Medical Association
Montana Medical Association
Nebraska Medical Association
New Hampshire Medical Society
New Mexico Medical Society
North Carolina Medical Society
North Dakota Medical Association
Ohio State Medical Association
Oklahoma 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
Wisconsin Medical Society
Wyoming Medical Society

State and Local Specialty Societies

Alabama Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Arizona Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery Society
Arkansas Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Buffalo Otolaryngology Society
Central Indiana Otolaryngology Society
Charleston ENT & Allergy
Cincinnati ENT Society
Colorado Ear Nose and Throat Society
Connecticut State ENT Society
Delaware Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Ear, Nose & Throat Associates of New York
Eastern Connecticut Ear, Nose & Throat PC
Emory Department of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Florida Society of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons
Florida Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Georgia Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Greater Miami Otolaryngology Association
Houston Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Iowa Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Jacksonville Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Kansas Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Kentucky Otolaryngology Head and Neck Society
Keystone Chapter of the American College of Surgeons
Long Island Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Louisiana Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Maine Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Maryland Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Massachusetts Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Metro Atlanta Educational Society for Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Metropolitan Philadelphia Chapter of the American College of Surgeons
Michigan Otolaryngological Society
Minnesota Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Mississippi Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck

Missouri Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Nebraska Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
New Mexico Otolaryngological Society
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
Oklahoma Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Orange County Society of Head and Neck Surgery
Pennsylvania Academy of Ophthalmology
Pennsylvania Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Pennsylvania Psychiatric Society
Pennsylvania Society of Gastroenterology
San Antonio Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
San Diego Academy of Otolaryngology
South Carolina Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Tidewater Otolaryngology Association
Vermont Otolaryngology Society
Virginia Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Washington Metropolitan Otolaryngology Society
West Virginia Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Wisconsin Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery

Cc: U.S. House of Representatives