

March 12, 2014

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner and Leader Pelosi:

On February 11, 2014, U.S. Representative Jim McDermott (D-WA) introduced, at the request of the American Academy of Audiology (AAA), H.R. 4035. As written, H.R. 4035 inappropriately provides audiologists with unlimited direct access to Medicare patients without a physician referral. This legislation represents a recycled legislative effort that is opposed by the undersigned organizations.

We strongly believe that a physician-led hearing healthcare team with coordination of services is the best approach for providing the highest quality care to patients. While audiologists play a critical role in providing quality hearing healthcare, aspirations of some audiologists to independently diagnose hearing disorders transcends their level of training and expertise.

In a report on the audiology direct access issue, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) declared that referrals from physicians are the “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” Bypassing a physician evaluation and referral can lead to a misdiagnosis and inappropriate treatment that could cause lasting, and expensive, harm to patients.

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.

For the health and well-being of America’s seniors, we respectfully urge you to oppose any efforts to advance this ill-advised legislation. Thank you for your consideration, and please contact the American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery at legfederal@entnet.org with any questions.

Sincerely,

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 Academy of Sleep Medicine
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American College of Rheumatology
American College of Surgeons
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 Society of Anesthesiologists
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery
American Society of Pediatric Otolaryngology
American Society of Plastic Surgery
American Urological Association
Association of Otolaryngology Administrators
National Association of Spine Specialists
Renal Physicians Association

State and Local Medical Associations

Medical Association of the State of Alabama
Arizona Medical Association
Arkansas Medical Society
Colorado Medical Society
Connecticut State Medical Society
Hawaii Medical Association
Idaho Medical Association
Illinois State Medical Society
Kansas Medical Society
Louisiana State Medical Society
Massachusetts Medical Society
MedChi, the Maryland State Medical Society
Medical Association of Georgia
Medical Society of Delaware
Medical Society of New Jersey
Medical Society of the District of Columbia
Medical Society of the State of New York
Medical Society of Virginia
Minnesota Medical Association
Mississippi State Medical Association
Montana Medical Association
Nebraska Medical Association
New Hampshire Medical Society

North Carolina Medical Society
North Dakota Medical Association
Ohio State Medical Association
Oklahoma State Medical Association
Pennsylvania Medical Society
Rhode Island Medical Society
South Dakota State Medical Association
Tennessee Medical Association
Texas Medical Association
Utah Medical Association
Vermont Medical Society
Wisconsin Medical Society

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
California Otolaryngology Society
Central Indiana Otolaryngology Society
Cincinnati Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Colorado ENT Society
Connecticut Ear, Nose, and Throat Society
Delaware Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Eastern Tennessee Otolaryngology—Head and Neck 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 Jacksonville ENT Society
Greater Miami Otolaryngology Association
Iowa Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Kansas Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Kentucky Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
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
Michigan Otolaryngological Society
Minnesota Academy of Otolaryngology
Mississippi Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Montana Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Nebraska Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
New Jersey Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
New York Laryngological Society
New York Otologic Society

New York State Society of Otolaryngology—Head & Neck Surgery
North Carolina Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Northeastern Ohio Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery Society
Northwest Academy of Otolaryngology
Oklahoma Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Oregon Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Pennsylvania Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Rhode Island Society of Ear Nose Throat Physicians
San Diego Academy of Otolaryngology
South Carolina Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
South Dakota Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
St. Louis ENT Club
Texas Association of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Utah Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Vermont Otolaryngology Society
Virginia Society of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Washington Metropolitan Area 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