

March 12, 2014

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader Reid and Leader McConnell:

On February 26, 2014, U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) introduced, at the request of the American Academy of Audiology (AAA), S. 2046. As written, S. 2046 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](mailto: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—Head and Neck Surgery  
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. Senate