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March 24, 2020

SENT ELECTRONICALLY

Seema Verma
Administrator, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Administrator Verma:

The American Academy of Audiology (the Academy) thanks you for the tireless efforts of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to share information with health care providers and reduce regulatory barriers to meet public needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Academy is the world's largest professional organization of, by and for audiologists. Representing the interests of approximately 14,000 audiologists nationwide, the Academy is dedicated to providing quality hearing and balance care services through professional development, education, research, and increased public awareness of hearing and balance disorders.

The Academy participated in today's first stakeholders' call in the series "Lessons from the Front Line: COVID-19" and were happy to hear that CMS will be issuing additional guidance about telehealth to reduce regulatory barriers and maximize provider participation for the benefit of Medicare beneficiaries. **As you do so, we ask that CMS apply its full regulatory authority to allow coverage of telehealth services provided by audiologists.**

Medicare currently lags behind the Veterans Administration, some private payers, and state licensing boards in allowing direct access to audiology services and for them to be provided via telehealth. One speaker on the stakeholders' call today highlighted that Medicare sets the standard for everyone in telehealth, which is why it imperative that CMS recognize the important role of audiologists in telehealth.

Access to hearing health care during the COVID-19 pandemic is critical, and telehealth delivery offers the most protection to the high-risk Medicare population. Audiologists provide important diagnostic and treatment services to seniors with hearing and balance disorders. This care helps prevent falls, reduce social isolation, and manage other comorbidities in this vulnerable patient population. If you have any questions regarding the information included in this letter, please contact Susan Pilch, Senior Director, Government Relations at spilch@audiology.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine Palmer".

Catherine V. Palmer, PhD
President, American Academy of Audiology