



# AAA Advocacy Toolkit

## The Medicare Audiology Access Improvement Act

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## Connecting to Congress

- 1. How do I find out who my elected representatives are in the House and Senate?** *Every state has two Senators who represent the entire state. Each state has a certain number of Representatives determined by the population size. Each Representative has a certain “district” and can be ascertained by zip code.*
  - **Access the Academy Legislative Action Center:** [Legislative Action Center - American Academy of Audiology](#)
  - **Access** <https://myreps.datamade.us/>
- 2. What are my options to connect with my members of Congress?**
  - *Access the Academy Legislative Action Center:* [Legislative Action Center - American Academy of Audiology](#) Click on “Take Action” and follow the prompts to send a message to your members of Congress
  - *Call Congress!* dial (866) 272-6622 to be connected with the Capitol Switchboard. They can connect you to the office. You can leave a message expressing your support for the Medicare Audiology Access Improvement Act.
  - *Send an email:* Find the dedicated website for your Representative and Senators. There is a section on each website to leave a message.
- 3. How Can I Set Up a Meeting?**
  - Call/email the office, identify yourself as a constituent and request to set up a virtual/zoom meeting with the health staffer.
  - Set up a meeting with MOC in their District Office. The dedicated website for each MOC includes a listing and phone number for each of their district offices. Congress takes breaks called recesses when Senators and Representatives leave Washington D.C. to spend time in their home District. Schedule a meeting during one of these times or invite your MOC to your audiology workplace! Find the House recess schedule here: <http://house.gov/legislative>. Find the Senate recess schedule here: <https://www.senate.gov/>.
- 4. Other Ways to Make an Impact**
  - Comment on a MOC’s social media posts
  - Tag a MOC on one of your advocacy posts
  - Write a letter to the editor of your local paper



## Congressional Meetings

### Sample Outline and Effective Messaging

#### Meeting Outline

- Introductions/Participants
- Brief explanation of profession of audiology (requisite education/scope of practice)
- Importance of access to audiology/hearing healthcare services
- Action Needed (sponsorship/support of MAAIA)
- Impact on other constituents/ patients—how will the bill help elderly citizens?
- Ask if any questions or clarification needed
- Leave behind materials—issue briefs, summary of issues with contact info
- Follow up with email reiterating conversation



#### Communicating Your Message Effectively

- Speak as both a constituent and as an audiologist
- Approach your meeting as a conversation; rather than a presentation
- Advocacy is personal—stories and anecdotes break down large policy issues and make them relatable
- Why should the legislator care about your issue? How does it affect real people in your district?
- Offer to serve as a resource/issue expert
- If you don't know the answer to a question—don't worry!—respond that you will look into it and get back to them

## Issue Brief

### The Medicare Audiology Access Improvement Act of 2023

#### **S. 2377**

On July 19, 2023, United States Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass), Rand Paul (R-Ky.), and Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) led their colleagues in introducing the bipartisan Medicare Audiology Access Improvement Act, legislation to ensure that seniors and people with disabilities on Medicare are able to access a full range of hearing and balance health care services provided by licensed audiologists, who are trained and licensed in all 50 states and U.S. territories, including the District of Columbia. The legislation is co-sponsored by Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), Kyrsten Sinema (I-Ariz.), Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), Peter Welch (D-Vt.), and Angus King (I-Maine). On November 17, 2023, identical legislation was introduced by Representatives Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) and Matt Cartwright (D-PA).

The American Academy of Audiology (AAA), Academy of Doctors of Audiology (ADA), and the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) endorse this legislation as a top priority to ensure expedient and optimal hearing and balance health care for the older adult population in the United States.

Outdated Medicare rules have created barriers to care and are far more restrictive than many private and federal insurance plans including Medicare Advantage, VA health coverage and the Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan. Medicare currently does not recognize audiologists as providers of most hearing-related services and will only allow reimbursement for a narrow set of tests to diagnose a hearing or balance disorder—and only if patients first obtain an order from a physician.

This legislation would provide a commonsense solution to modernize Medicare regulations to ensure beneficiaries have access to a full range of hearing and balance health care services provided by licensed audiologists. The bill would:

- Classify audiologists as “practitioners”—consistent with how Medicare treats similar allied health care professionals—such as clinical social workers and clinical psychologists
- Remove the physician order requirement, which does not exist with any other federal or commercial payer
- Allow audiologists to provide and be reimbursed for diagnostic and treatment services
- Add audiologists as practitioners in Rural Health Clinics and FQHCs.
- Make no changes to the current scope of Medicare hearing health benefits or the scope of practice of audiologists

## Medicare Audiology Access Improvement Act Talking Points

This legislation will make the following positive and cost-effective changes to Medicare to improve patient access to hearing healthcare:

- “Modernize” Medicare treatment of audiology (unchanged since 1965)
- Bring traditional Medicare in line with virtually all other public and private in its treatment of audiologists and audiology services
- Remove unnecessary barriers to audiology services (physician order)
- Allow beneficiaries to access audiology treatment services (authorized in all fifty state practice acts).
- Facilitate the provision of audiology telehealth services in Medicare (reclassifying audiologists from “supplier” to “practitioner”)
- Expand access to audiology services in medically underserved areas and populations (adds audiologists as practitioners in Rural Health Clinics and Federally Qualified Health Centers)

This legislation will not: (talking points to dispel misconceptions!)

- Add any new services to Medicare (audiology treatment services that are now covered are administered by other providers)
- Require any significant cost to the federal government (Moran Group provided a private “score” (estimated \$111 Million over ten years)
- Expand the audiology scope of practice (Medicare scopes of practice are governed by state law in which services are provided)
- Add coverage of hearing aids to Medicare