



Learn more about the Academy's advocacy efforts through the following resources:

- ★ Academy's Government Relations and Reimbursement News web pages
- ★ Legislative Action Center
- ★ *Audiology Weekly* E-Newsletter
- ★ Grassroots Advocacy Network (sign up today!)
- ★ *Audiology Today* articles
- ★ Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter
- ★ Text messages on the latest audiology breaking news. Opt-in by texting "Advocacy" to 797979. Msg&data rates may apply. To unsubscribe from this list reply 'STOP' to 797979.



*The Academy Board of Directors pose on the U.S. Capitol grounds before a full day of Hill visits.*

**T**his *Year in Review* details how the American Academy of Audiology mobilized its legislative, regulatory, and political resources to advocate for audiologists on critical issues facing the profession. Of note, the Academy came together with the Academy of Doctors of Audiology (ADA) and the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) to draft, secure congressional champions, and lobby additional support for the Medicare Audiology Access and Services Act of 2019 (H.R. 4056, S. 2446). This legislation would grant audiologists “practitioner” status in Medicare, remove the physician referral requirement, and allow audiologists to provide and be reimbursed for diagnostic and treatment services. The Academy also weighed in on multiple legislative proposals on hearing aid coverage, telehealth, and allied health workforce diversity.

The Academy was able to work with congressional staff to get “practitioner” status and “treatment services” added to a Medicare hearing aid bill that was ultimately included in H.R. 3—the House drug pricing package—that subsequently passed the House of Representatives.

In addition, the Academy submitted formal comments to two congressional committees to highlight the role that audiologists play in reducing the risk of falls in older adults as well as the benefit of expanding access to audiology services in rural areas.

The year ahead promises to be a busy one and the Academy will continue to advocate on all fronts and seek out new opportunities to ensure the continued success of the profession.

# Legislative Activities

- ★ Following the introduction of the Medicare Audiology Access and Services Act of 2019 (H.R. 4056/S. 2446)—the “Joint Audiology Bill”—embarked on coordinated lobbying campaign with American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) and Academy of Doctors of Audiology (ADA) to meet with all members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, the House Ways and Means Committee, and Senate Finance Committee—as well as professional staffers for these committees.
- ★ Hosted a congressional briefing on the joint audiology bill. The briefing included opening remarks by Representative Matt Cartwright (D-PA), a co-sponsor of the bill, and a presentation by Academy President Catherine Palmer, PhD, along with representatives from ASHA and ADA.
- ★ Along with other audiology stakeholders, met with an advisor to the Secretary of Health and Human Services to provide information on the joint audiology bill and make the case that increasing access to hearing and balance care fits squarely into the administration’s focus on addressing social determinants of health.
- ★ Worked to ensure certain portions of the joint audiology bill were amended into H.R. 4618, the Medicare Hearing Act of 2019—legislation to add a hearing aid benefit to Medicare. Academy staff worked with other stakeholders and congressional members and staff to secure amendment language to include audiologist “practitioner” status, treatment services, and a study on providing beneficiaries with direct access to audiologists. H.R. 4618 (including these amendments) was “rolled into” H.R. 3 and passed the full House of Representatives.
- ★ Supported the Allied Health Workforce Diversity Act (H.R. 2771/S.2747). This legislation would make scholarships/stipends available to students typically underrepresented in audiology as well as occupational therapy, speech-language pathology, and physical therapy. Secured language that includes Accreditation Commission for Audiology Education (ACAE) programs as eligible educational entities and specifies the Academy as an organization charged with the disbursement of funds.
- ★ Submitted comments in response to a Senate Special Committee on Aging request for stakeholder recommendations on prevention and management of falls and fall-related injuries. Academy comments highlighted the role of the audiologist in the identification and treatment of hearing and balance disorders as well as the clear link between hearing loss and falls.
- ★ Submitted comments in response to a House Ways and Means Committee Rural and Underserved Communities request for stakeholder recommendations on priority topics for consideration to address the health inequities that exist in rural and underserved areas. Academy comments direct the Task Force to consider The Medicare Audiology Access and Services Act of 2019 (H.R. 4056/S.2446)—to expand beneficiary access to these services.



Congressional interest in health-care-related issues and access to care is expected to remain an area of focus throughout 2020.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

# Coding and Reimbursement

- ★ Analyzed and submitted comments and prepared summary educational documents detailing the proposed and final rules for the CY 2020 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule, Hospital Outpatient Prospective Payment System and the Quality Payment Program.
- ★ Chaired the Audiology Quality Consortium (AQC), a dynamic group of 10 audiology organizations. AQC’s mission is to collaborate on the development of audiology quality measures, monitor the status of audiology quality measures for reporting under the Quality Payment Program (QPP), respond to proposed rules and measure changes by CMS and other measure owners on behalf of the audiology community, and educate audiologists regarding audiology quality measures and QPP reporting requirements.
- ★ Contributed articles for each issue of *Audiology Today*, focused on topics of member interest and concern (identified by inquiries to the Coding and Reimbursement mailbox resource).

# Regulatory Activities

- ★ Closely monitored the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for anticipated rulemaking on the implementation of the Over the Counter Hearing Aid Act of 2017. Proposed regulations expected in early 2020.

Ohio Students “spell it out” for legislators.



Academy Government Relations staff conducted an intensive lobbying effort—meeting with members and supporting staffers of the House Ways and Means Committee, House Energy and Commerce Committee, and Senate Finance Committee—to garner support for the Joint Audiology Bill (H.R. 4056/S. 2446).

**DID YOU KNOW?**



## State Activities

- ★ Provided Academy endorsement of the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact (ASLP-IC), an occupational licensure compact. The Academy supports state-level efforts to advance licensure compact legislation.
- ★ Represented the Academy and the profession by exhibiting at the National Conference of State Legislatures annual meeting
- ★ Maintained membership in the National Council of State Boards (NCSB); presented an Academy update and exhibited at the NCSB annual meeting.
- ★ Submitted comments in response to the Colorado sunset review of the audiology licensure law. Academy comments recommended the inclusion of telepractice and defended the current references to “vestibular” and “balance.”
- ★ Updated Academy resource document on state hearing aid insurance mandates for children and adults.
- ★ Created new Academy resource listing audiologist scopes of practice from every state.
- ★ Provided technical assistance to an Ohio news station story on pending state legislation to mandate insurance coverage of hearing aids. As a result, the Academy appeared in a follow-up Good Morning America segment on the issue.
- ★ Issued an Academy New York Action Alert urging members to oppose S5131—a state bill that would have allowed physician offices to dispense hearing aids at a significant profit and been in conflict with the current state law prohibiting physician self-referral.
- ★ Submitted a letter to the DC Council expressing concerns about a recently introduced bill, the Hearing Aid Sales Amendment Act of 2019.
- ★ Weighed in on proposed PA legislation—urging amendments to the bill to clarify distinction between state issued credentials and private certification (American Board of Audiology).



The Academy PAC makes contributions in a bipartisan manner to support members of Congress who have shown leadership or interest in promoting the legislative priorities of the Academy, such as direct access and practitioner status in Medicare or audiology/hearing health-care issues in general.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

## Political Action Committee (PAC) Activities

- ★ Contributed \$5,000 to both the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and the National Republican Congressional Campaign Committee.
- ★ Contributed \$15,000 to political parties and candidates in the 2019 calendar year.
- ★ Communicated PAC activities to members through the website and the Audiology Weekly e-newsletter.

# Member Engagement

## Hill Visits

The Academy hosted Capitol Hill Days for the following groups:

- ★ The Academy Board of Directors
- ★ The Student Academy of Audiology Board of Directors
- ★ Nova Southeastern University
- ★ The Ohio State University and the Northeast Ohio AuD Consortium
- ★ Members of Academy leadership, members of the Government Relations Committee, and individual Academy members

## Grassroots Advocacy Network

The Academy is committed to growing the Grassroots Advocacy Network in the coming year and encourages all members interested in advocacy to register online. In 2020, members of the Grassroots Advocacy Network will have access to regular, more detailed information about “behind the scenes” Academy activity on the advocacy front and late breaking news.

In addition, the Network enables the Academy to get critical messages out to engaged members in the event that concerted grassroots action is needed to highlight a critical issue with legislators. **Sign up today!**

## State Fair

The Academy hosted its fourth annual state event at the AAA Annual Conference and Expo in 2019. Steadily increasing in participation by states each year, this event is a great opportunity for state leaders to network with audiologists in their own and other states. New in 2020 and moving forward, this event will be known as the State Showcase and an exciting new format will be unveiled at AAA 2020 + HearTECH Expo.

## Academy Collaborations

The Academy seeks opportunities to work with many different stakeholders to advance its advocacy efforts.

- ★ National Institute on Deafness and Other Communications Disorders (NIDCD) Advisory Council
- ★ Deaf and Hard of Hearing Alliance (DHHA)
- ★ Audiology Quality Consortium (AQC) (to address quality reporting and the transition to the Physician Quality Reporting System [PQRS] to the Quality Payment Program [QPP])
- ★ Professional organizations representing audiology and/or hearing health interests (AAO-HNS, ADA, ASHA, HIA, HIS, and many more)
- ★ Patients’ Access to Responsible Care Alliance (PARCA)
- ★ Friends of the Congressional Hearing Health Caucus (FCHHC)
- ★ The Occupational Hearing Health Coalition



### Volunteer Involvement

Look for opportunities in 2020 to get involved with the advocacy volunteer positions.

### Advocacy Council

Gail Whitelaw, PhD, *Chair*

### Government Relations Committee

Jodi Baxter, AuD, *Chair*

### Coding and Reimbursement Committee

Anna Jilla, AuD, PhD, *Chair*

### Practice Policy Advisory Council

Kayden Williams, AuD, *Chair*

### PAC Advisory Board

Courtney Glavin, AuD, *Chair*

### State Relations Committee

Aaron Roman, AuD, *Chair*

### Academy Advocacy Staff

Susan Pilch, JD, and Kathleen Bishop