



H.R. 4056/S.2446

MEDICARE AUDIOLOGIST ACCESS & SERVICES ACT OF 2019

Summary

Increasing direct access to diagnostic and therapeutic services of audiologists.

The Vestibular Disorders Association (VeDA) is in support of the bipartisan legislation H.R. 4056/S. 2446: Medicare Audiologist Access and Services Act of 2019. If enacted, this legislation would remove unnecessary barriers to care, allowing patients to receive appropriate, timely, and cost-effective audiologic services, which include vestibular testing. This legislation can improve outcomes for beneficiaries by allowing direct access to audiologic services and streamlining Medicare coverage policies so that audiologists can provide the full range of Medicare-covered diagnostic and treatment services that correspond to their scope of practice. This could lead to a reduction in the time it takes to reach a diagnosis and receive treatment for those suffering from vestibular dysfunction. As a result, this will reduce the number of doctor's visits and specialist referrals that add cost to the healthcare system.

Letter to Send to Your Legislator

As your constituent, I urge you to please co-sponsor H.R. 4056/S. 2446. If enacted, this legislation would remove unnecessary Medicare barriers to care, allowing patients to receive appropriate, timely, and cost-effective audiologic services, including vestibular testing.

The Medicare Audiologist Access and Services Act of 2019 can improve outcomes for beneficiaries by allowing direct access to audiologic services and streamlining Medicare coverage policies so that audiologists can provide the full range of Medicare-covered diagnostic and treatment services that correspond to their scope of practice without a physician's referral. Currently, audiologists are relied upon for performing essential hearing and balance testing. However, Medicare does not recognize audiologists as providers. Rather, they are seen solely as "diagnostic professionals."

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Additionally, Medicare will only allow reimbursement for a limited set of diagnostic tests, and only after a patient obtains a physician order. This legislation would reclassify audiologists as practitioners, which is consistent with the way Medicare recognizes other non-physician providers.

The patient population that is most affected by hearing and balance related dysfunctions is of Medicare age. Giving beneficiaries direct access to audiologic services would lead to a reduction in the time it takes to reach a diagnosis and receive treatment for those suffering from vestibular dysfunction. As a result, this will reduce the number of doctor's visits and specialist referrals that add cost to the healthcare system. One of the most common causes of dizziness in the Medicare-aged population could be easily identified and treated with one visit to an audiologist. Reducing the time to get treatment may also help to reduce their risk of falls, which have the potential of incurring serious injury.

Again, I urge you to please co-sponsor H.R. 4056/S. 2446.

Thank you for considering my views.

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