

Tips and Scripts for Speaking with Your Legislators

Medicare Audiology Access Improvement Act (MAAIA)

Good morning/afternoon--thank you so much for taking the time to meet with us today. My name is [Your Name], and I'm an audiologist student attending school in [name of school and program] from [City, State]. I'm joined by my colleagues---let them introduce themselves.

We are here to share with you their stories about WHY we have chosen to become Audiologists and then I am going to talk to you about the best way to support our profession.

I want to become an audiologist because.... [share your personal story/journey]

The best way to help these audiologists in general is to pass H.R. 2757 (If meeting with Senate Staff –S. 1996) – the Medicare Audiology Access Improvement Act – and why we're asking for your support as a cosponsor of this bipartisan legislation.

As you may know, Medicare's current rules for audiology services are outdated and restrict access to necessary care for millions of beneficiaries—especially seniors dealing with hearing and balance issues.

Under current law--

- *Audiologists are not recognized as practitioners under Medicare.*
- *Medicare will only cover diagnostic tests performed by audiologists if prescribed by a physician, even when it's clearly within the audiologist's scope to assess the issue directly.*
- *This creates delays, added costs, and unnecessary physician visits, especially for older adults who may already face transportation or mobility challenges.*

At the same time, Medicare recognizes the need for preventive and team-based care—yet continues to treat audiology as an exception.

WHAT H.R. 2757 DOES

H.R. 2757 is a simple, bipartisan solution that modernizes Medicare's treatment of audiology services. Specifically, the bill would:

1. *Allow Medicare beneficiaries to directly access audiologists without a referral, just like they do for other non-physician providers like physical therapists.*
2. *Recognize audiologists as practitioners under Medicare, which aligns with how most private insurers and state Medicaid programs already operate.*
3. *Ensure Medicare covers both diagnostic and treatment services that audiologists are licensed to perform.*

It's important to note that this does not expand the scope of practice—it simply allows audiologists to practice to the full extent of their state licensure within Medicare.

Thank you again for your time and attention. We hope you'll consider cosponsoring H.R. 2757 to support better, more accessible hearing and balance care for Medicare beneficiaries.

Tips and Scripts for Speaking with Your Legislators

Additional facts on MAAIA

Hearing and balance issues are linked to serious health outcomes—including cognitive decline, falls, social isolation, and depression. Yet, hearing loss remains one of the most undertreated conditions among older Americans.

We've heard from countless patients who wait months to get care because of unnecessary red tape. With an aging population, now is the time to make access easier and more efficient.

And from a fiscal perspective, improving access to early intervention can help reduce costs related to falls, dementia, and preventable complications.

Removing Cap on Student loans

In the fall of 2025, the Department of Education released a proposed rule establishing new federal student loan limits of \$50,000 annually and a lifetime cap of \$200,000, reduced from the current \$257,000 maximum. Under the proposal, only 11 designated professions would remain eligible for the full \$257,000 cap. All other professions not included on this list—including audiologists—would be limited to a maximum of \$100,000 in federal student loans. The Department is expected to issue a final rule in late January or early February. At that time, we will be looking for letters of support for audiology to be add to the list of eleven professions that qualify for the higher level of funding.

- *In the meantime, we would like to ask for your support of the Professional Student Degree Act, H.R. 6718, introduced by Representative Michael Lawler (R-NY). This bill reaffirms audiology's status as a professional degree under federal law, a necessary step to protecting student loan access for the next generation of audiologists.*
- *The language updates the Higher Education Act to define which programs qualify as professional degrees and explicitly includes audiology as one of these programs. This clarification ensures that students enrolled in AuD programs remain eligible for the higher federal student loan limits intended for doctoral-level professional education.*

[Tell your story about the importance of student loans to your education, the high cost of your education and how many years of education is required to become an audiologist. Because audiology still meets the Higher Education Acts definition of professional, we just aren't listed as one of the 11.]

Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Funding

The Early Hearing Detection and Intervention—or EHDI—program is one of our country's most successful public health initiatives. It ensures that every baby born in the United States receives a hearing screening, and if needed, timely diagnosis and intervention. Thanks to EHDI, over 98% of newborns are screened for hearing loss before they leave the hospital. That's a public health success story.

But this year, that story is under threat. With the proposed elimination of the HRSA program to manage EDHI and the drastic reduction of CDC employees, these cuts have real consequences. States rely on EHDI funds to track babies who don't pass their newborn hearing

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screening and ensure they receive timely follow-up. Without adequate funding, states may struggle to:

- *Ensure infants receive diagnostic testing by 3 months of age,*
- *Support families in accessing hearing aids and early intervention,*
- *Maintain centralized data systems that prevent children from falling through the cracks.*

The result? Delays in care, missed diagnoses, and children entering school with undetected hearing loss—at tremendous cost to them, their families, and our education system.”

We know that children who receive hearing intervention before 6 months of age develop language at levels comparable to their hearing peers. But children who are missed can face lifelong challenges in speech, language, and learning.

We urge Congress to restore full funding to the EHDI program in the Labor Health and Human Services Appropriation Bill.

Early hearing detection is not optional. It's essential. Let's protect the progress we've made—for every child, every family, and our shared future.

Thank you so much for your time today, we truly appreciate the opportunity to talk to you about these important issues.