

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF AUDIOLOGY

May 17, 2017

The Honorable Dave Loebsack
1527 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Loebsack:

The American Academy of Audiology (the “Academy”) is the world's largest professional organization of, by, and for audiologists, representing over 12,000 members. On behalf of the Academy, I want to sincerely thank you for introducing H.R. 2042, the Frontline Access to Health Care Act. This legislation addresses a critical problem facing the audiology community today: the high cost of education. If enacted, the bill would authorize the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to establish a Frontline Providers Loan Repayment Program under which HHS would make student loan repayments in exchange for health professionals, including audiologists, providing two years of service in a health care facility serving a frontline scarcity area.

Recent studies have shown that the student loan burden on Doctor of Audiology (AuD) students has increased significantly over time. Audiology students pursuing their PhD also face considerable educational costs. In 2005, peak debt for fourth year AuD students was \$30,000-45,000. In 2014, this peak amount had nearly doubled to \$60,000-85,000.¹ A recent study estimates that while salaries have increased approximately 47 percent since 2005, the cost of education has risen nearly 140 percent, creating a significant disparity between educational debt and salary.² This legislation will help encourage audiologists to practice in areas where critical services are scarce to help offset some of their education costs.

We look forward to working with you and your Congressional colleagues to ensure that this essential piece of legislation is signed into law. If the Academy can ever be of any assistance to you or your office, please do not hesitate to contact Adam Finkel, Associate Director of Government Relations by phone at 703-226-1060 or via email at afinkel@audiology.org.

Sincerely,



Ian Windmill, PhD
President, American Academy of Audiology

¹ The Rising Cost of AuD Education (2016). Retrieved May 9, 2017 from:

<http://hearinghealthmatters.org/hearinprivatepractice/2016/rising-cost-audiology-education-debt/>

² <http://hearinghealthmatters.org/hearinprivatepractice/2016/rising-cost-audiology-education-debt/>