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March 3, 2025

The Honorable Deb Patterson
Senate Committee on Health Care
900 Court St NE, S-411
Salem, OR, 97301

Sent Via Email: Sen.DebPatterson@oregonlegislature.gov

Dear Chairperson Patterson,

On behalf of the American Academy of Audiology, the world's largest professional organization, by and for audiologists, I want to share with you the benefits of SB 943.

This legislation focuses on efficiency and reducing barriers to patients' access to timely, coordinated, and effective care, particularly in underserved and rural areas. Under SB 943, audiologists could order necessary imaging, cultures, and bloodwork testing to support a streamlined referral process. This enhanced process could result in the elimination of unnecessary office visits and the development of faster diagnoses and treatment plans.

Audiologists are the primary healthcare professionals who evaluate, diagnose, treat, and manage hearing loss and balance disorders in individuals of all ages, from infants to older adults. The audiologic evaluation is the first step in determining if a need exists for further medical intervention and referral. Through SB 943, the audiologist could order necessary testing to ensure that the consulting provider has critical diagnostic information needed to determine a treatment plan.

Additionally, to ensure greater clarity and consistency in licensure requirements, the Academy supports the inclusion of language in the bill that would formally recognize the Accreditation Commission for Audiology Education (ACAE). Recognizing ACAE-accredited programs will streamline licensure processes, reduce administrative barriers, and help expand Oregon's audiology workforce. By providing a clearer and more efficient pathway for qualified professionals, this change will ultimately improve patient access to high-quality care.

The American Academy of Audiology recognizes the need to modernize outdated statutes and regulations that stymie the practice of audiology and its evolution to meet the needs of patients. Efforts at the federal and state levels to remove barriers and expand access are critical to supporting audiologists to practice at the top of their license. SB 943 prioritizes patient care by ensuring full access to comprehensive hearing and balance healthcare services most efficiently.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia Gaffney AuD, MPH".

Patricia Gaffney. AuD, MPH
President