

# ADVOCACY QUARTERLY NEWS

AMERICAN  
ACADEMY OF  
AUDIOLOGY



**June 2026**

*Every year, legislative and regulatory developments at both the federal and state levels affect audiology and hearing-health care. This quarterly newsletter provides a concise overview of key updates and issues you need to know, along with upcoming events of interest.*

## Federal Updates

### **Academy Calls for FY 2027 Investments in Hearing Health**

As Congress advances the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) appropriations bill, the Academy is advocating for targeted federal investments to strengthen hearing and balance health across the lifespan—from newborn hearing screening to cutting-edge research.

Research supported by the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) has led to significant advances in early detection, cochlear implants, hearing aids, speech and language therapies, and other innovations that have improved the lives of millions of Americans. However, NIDCD funding remained essentially flat in FY 2026 at \$534.3 million, limiting opportunities to accelerate scientific progress.

For FY 2027, the Academy is supporting a \$20 million increase for NIDCD to advance research in key priority areas, including inner ear regeneration, central auditory processing, next-generation hearing technologies, and translational science that can move promising discoveries from the laboratory to patient care more quickly.

The Academy is also advocating for increased funding for the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Program, which plays a critical role in ensuring infants and young children receive timely hearing screening, diagnosis, and intervention services.

The Academy also supports a \$5 million increase for the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) program, a cornerstone public health program that ensures early hearing health care for infants with hearing loss. Additional funding would expand access to care, improve follow-up and intervention, especially in underserved communities, and reduce long-term educational and societal costs.

As of this writing, the House LHHS Appropriations Subcommittee has approved a bill that would provide level funding for both NIDCD and EHDI, maintaining FY 2026 funding levels. The Academy will continue to work with Congress throughout the appropriations process to secure increased investments in these vital programs and ensure continued progress in hearing and balance healthcare.

[\*\*View the Academy's Letter on NIDCD Funding\*\*](#)

[\*\*View the Letter on EHDI Funding\*\*](#)

## **Academy Advocacy on Federal Student Loan Reform**

In late April, the U.S. Department of Education finalized a major student loan rule that affects graduate and professional education. Effective July 1, 2026, the rule eliminates Grad PLUS loans, caps borrowing, and limits the definition of “professional” degrees to 11 fields, which excludes audiology. The Academy believes the rule will:

- Reduce the number of students pursuing audiology
- Worsen existing workforce shortages
- Limit access to hearing and balance care, particularly in rural and underserved communities
- Undermine long-term patient access to essential healthcare services

The Academy is deeply disappointed that, despite strong public comments from audiologists and stakeholders, the department did not recognize audiology as a qualifying professional degree. This decision fails to reflect the doctoral-level education required for the AuD and creates financial barriers for students.

The Academy continues to advocate on this issue. At this time, there are several legislative solutions:

H.R. 6718, The Professional Student Loan Act, offers a solution. The Academy worked closely with Representative Mike Lawler (R-NY) to ensure audiologists are included in the bill, which would help protect access to federal student loans for our profession.

The American Academy of Audiology has also formally endorsed the Congressional Review Act (CRA) resolution by Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Representative Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) to repeal the U.S. Department of Education's recently finalized federal student loan rule before it is enacted as expected on July 1, 2026. The resolution is still pending introduction but is expected for formal publication in early June. The Academy supports this effort as an important step toward preserving access to doctoral healthcare education and protecting the future healthcare workforce.

### **Call to Action**

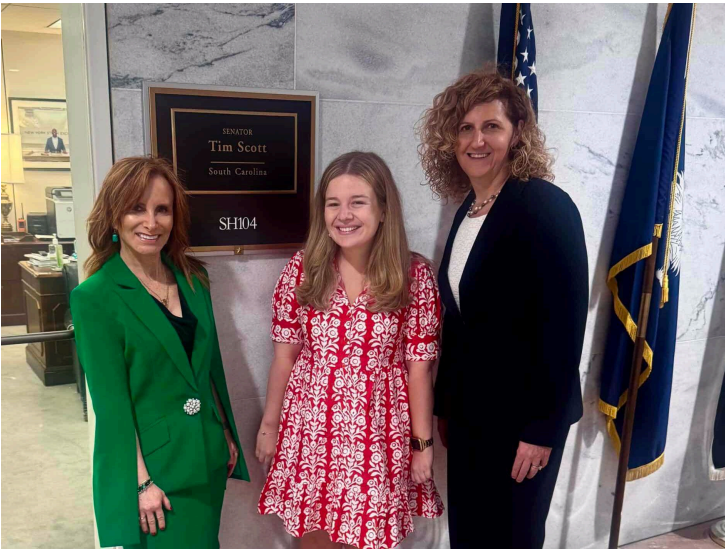
The Academy is urging all audiologists, students, educators, and advocates to contact their U.S. senators and representatives as soon as possible and ask them to support the CRA joint resolution.

Members are encouraged to share how the department's rule could affect educational access, workforce development, and patient care within their communities. Policymakers need to hear directly from constituents about the real-world impact these changes could have on the future of healthcare professions like audiology.

### **Take Action**

## **Academy Advocacy on Capitol Hill for Student Loan Reform and EHDI Support**

In late May, Academy representatives traveled to Capitol Hill to advocate for two important Audiology priorities: protecting access to federal student loans for audiology students and supporting Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) programs.



During meetings with congressional offices, Academy representatives highlighted the growing challenges facing audiology students and emphasized the importance of preserving access to federal student loan programs. As policymakers continue to debate changes to federal student loan policies, the Academy remains focused on ensuring future audiologists can pursue the education required to enter the profession. Representatives also urged continued federal investment in hearing health programs, including Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) programs, which play a critical role in identifying hearing loss early and connecting children and families with timely intervention and support services.

Audiologist, Dr. Heche, brought a unique perspective to these discussions as chair of the Academy's Political Action Committee (PAC) and owner of a private audiology practice in New York City. Her experience as both a clinician and practice owner highlighted the direct connection between workforce challenges and patient access to care.

Their visit reflects the Academy's continued commitment to ensuring audiology has a strong voice on Capitol Hill and that policymakers understand the impact these issues have on both the profession and the patient's audiologists serve.

## **Medicaid Work Requirements Rule Could Affect Access to Hearing Healthcare**

In early June, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued an Interim Final Rule implementing Medicaid work requirements for certain adult beneficiaries beginning in 2027. Under the policy, many adults enrolled through Medicaid expansion will be required to document work, education, job training, or other qualifying activities to maintain coverage.

While the stated goal is to encourage workforce participation, the rule raises important concerns for the hearing healthcare community. For many low-income adults with hearing loss, Medicaid provides critical access to diagnostic audiology services, hearing aids (where covered), auditory rehabilitation, and related healthcare services.

Untreated hearing loss is associated with communication difficulties, reduced employment opportunities, social isolation, and poorer health outcomes. Individuals with hearing loss may face unique challenges complying with reporting requirements, particularly if communication barriers make it difficult to receive notices, navigate administrative processes, or document eligibility.

Although the rule includes exemptions for certain individuals with disabilities and medical conditions, it remains unclear how states will apply those exemptions to individuals with significant hearing loss who may not otherwise meet disability standards. As states begin implementing these requirements, the Academy will monitor their effect on access to hearing healthcare and advocate policies that ensure individuals with hearing loss do not lose coverage because of administrative barriers. Protecting access to audiology services remains essential to improving health outcomes, supporting workforce participation, and advancing the Academy's commitment to patient-centered hearing healthcare.

# Virginia Board Advances Rulemaking to Restore ABA Certification Pathway

Last year, the Virginia Board of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology finalized regulatory changes intended to streamline licensure by removing the direct linkage between certification and licensure. As part of that effort, language recognizing American Board of Audiology (ABA) certification as a pathway to licensure was eliminated. The Academy raised concerns about this approach, emphasizing the importance of maintaining fair, consistent, and inclusive licensure pathways for audiologists.

In response, the Academy submitted a petition for rulemaking in December 2025, requesting that ABA certification be reinstated in Virginia's regulations. The petition underscored that recognizing ABA certification promotes clarity for applicants and aligns with the profession's evolving standards.

Following the public comment period, which closed on February 11, 2026, the board considered the petition at its April 21, 2026, meeting. The board voted to accept the Academy's petition and initiate rulemaking to restore ABA certification as an approved pathway to licensure. The board determined the change to be noncontroversial and will proceed using a fast-track rulemaking process.

The Academy views this decision as an important step toward ensuring equitable access to licensure for qualified audiologists. We will continue to monitor the rulemaking process and engage as needed to support the successful restoration of ABA certification language.

***Have questions? Contact a member of the government relations team:***

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