ACTION REQUESTED

ISSUE: Medicare Does Not Provide Comprehensive Coverage for Audiology Services
Medicare only covers diagnostic tests performed by audiologists to assess hearing and balance when ordered by a physician.

- The National Academy of Sciences issued a report, “Hearing Health Care for Adults: Priorities for Improving Access and Affordability,” which recommended Medicare coverage of audioligic treatment.¹
- Audiologists’ scope of practice includes auditory and vestibular treatment and neurological monitoring.
- Timely access to diagnosis and treatment for hearing and vestibular conditions can improve outcomes for beneficiaries and reduce overall cost of care because of enhanced compliance and communication.
- Administrative requirements for referral and oversight unnecessarily delay care and increase costs.
- Untreated hearing loss can lead to depression, anxiety, and emotional instability.²
- Most private health plans allow for direct access to audiology services, which is consistent with state laws.
- Vestibular and audiologic treatments (within an audiologist’s scope of practice under state law) are services currently covered under Medicare benefits when provided by other practitioners.

SOLUTION: Cosponsor H.R. 4056/S. 2446, Which Would Improve Beneficiary Access to Audiology Services by Recognizing Audiologists as Independent Practitioners Who Can Provide Treatment and Diagnostic Services Under Medicare

- Expand coverage to include all Medicare covered diagnostic and treatment services that correspond to audiology’s scope of practice.
- Allow for direct access to audiology services by removing language requiring a physician order.
- Reclassify audiologists from “supplier” to “practitioner” to better recognize the role audiologists play in providing hearing health care services.