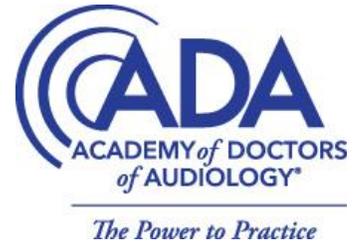




AMERICAN
SPEECH-LANGUAGE-
HEARING
ASSOCIATION



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Audiology Organizations Fight to Secure Patient Protections for Veterans Seeking Hearing Health Services

Today's passage of [H.R. 3471, the Veterans Mobility Safety Act of 2015](#), represents an important first step in preventing hearing aid dispensers from expanding their scope of practice within the VA system and ensuring that veterans continue to receive the highest standard of audiologic care provided by, and under the direction of, qualified audiologists.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), the American Academy of Audiology (AAA) and the Academy of Doctors of Audiology (ADA), collectively the *Audiology Organizations*, have stopped the advancement of the original U.S. House version of the misguided "[Fit to Serve](#)" [legislation \(H.R. 353\)](#), proposed and shepherded by the International Hearing Society (IHS) and hearing aid dispensers nationwide. While the Audiology Organizations continue to maintain that the Veterans Health Administration currently has the authority to hire hearing aid dispensers, this language will provide congressional intent on the role these individuals can play in the VA.

Together, the Audiology Organizations worked with members of Congress to modify the bill's language to appropriately restrict job duties of hearing aid dispensers to reflect their limited training and education. As a result, the language now contained in the [Veterans Mobility Safety Act](#) includes the following patient protections, which did not previously exist:

(b) REQUIREMENTS.—With respect to appointing hearing aid specialists under sections 7401 and 7402 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by subsection (a), and providing services furnished by such specialists, the Secretary shall ensure that—

(1) a hearing aid specialist may only perform hearing services consistent with the hearing aid specialist's State license related to the practice of fitting and dispensing hearing aids without excluding other qualified professionals, including audiologists, from rendering services in overlapping practice areas;

(2) services provided to veterans by hearing aid specialists shall be provided as part of the non-medical treatment plan developed by an audiologist; and

(3) the medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs provide to veterans access to the full range of professional services provided by an audiologist.

(c) CONSULTATION.—In determining the qualifications required for hearing aid specialists and in carrying out subsection (b), the Secretary shall consult with veterans service organizations, audiologists,

otolaryngologists, hearing aid specialists, and other stakeholder and industry groups as the Secretary determines appropriate.

These requirements recognize and preserve the important role of audiologists as clinical doctors, duly responsible for the development and oversight of patients' audiologic plans of care, and limit the role of hearing aid dispensers to that of the fitting and dispensing of hearing aids only.

The Audiology Organizations are unified in our commitment to serve America's heroes and ensure optimal hearing health care led by audiologists. Though we have stopped the original version of [H.R. 353](#) from advancing in the House of Representatives, there is still important advocacy work to be done on the Senate side to prevent efforts to advance the Senate companion of this bill, [S. 564](#). The language contained in this bill is similar to that of [H.R. 353](#) and does not reflect the compromised language found in [H.R. 3471](#). The Audiology Organizations will be hard at work on the Hill advocating against this legislation, but we need all of our audiologist members to contact their Senators and oppose this bill. To send a letter visit [AAA's Legislative Action Center](#), [ADA's Congressional Connect](#), or [ASHA's Take Action Advocacy Center](#).

Should a companion bill to [H.R. 3471](#) be introduced in the U.S. Senate, we will work diligently on behalf of our members and their patients to further strengthen the legislative language to reflect best practices in the delivery of safe, effective and efficient hearing health care services for veterans.

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