

July 2, 2014

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Majority Leader
H-107, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McCarthy:

The organizations listed below request your leadership in the passage of H.R. 1919, the Steve Gleason Act of 2015. This legislation allows for the immediate purchase and transfer of ownership for speech-generating devices (SGDs) to the Medicare beneficiary and removes the devices from the Medicare capped-rental requirements. Recently, H.R. 1919 was voted out of the Ways and Means Committee by a unanimous bipartisan vote. The Senate passed an identical bill, S. 984, on April 22, 2015.

We respectfully request that you bring H.R. 1919 to the House of Representatives for a vote. The legislation removes speech-generating devices from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) capped-rental requirements. Capped-rental adversely affects patients using these devices that are in an extended hospital stay or in a skilled nursing facility. While the patient is in the rental period, Medicare will not pay for the rental fees when the patients are in these facilities and they lose access at a most critical time when they need to communicate with their inpatient health care providers. In addition the legislation ensures coverage of eye tracking technology that allows individuals with extremely limited voluntary muscle control to effectively use the device to communicate their personal and health care needs.

Speech-generating devices are highly customized electronic augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems used to supplement or replace speech, enabling individuals with functional communication impairments to verbally communicate their needs. H.R. 1919 helps individuals that are unable to communicate by other modes of communication access speech-generating devices. Proprietary data from one of the major manufactures of the device indicates that individuals suffering the effects of stroke are the top users of these devices, followed by individuals with traumatic brain injury. Other users of the device include individuals with Parkinson's disease, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), and other complex neurological conditions that have rendered the Medicare beneficiary unable to communicate their health care and personal needs without such assistance.

CMS has maintained in several conversations with stakeholders that the capped-rental issue must be addressed through legislation. The Steve Gleason Act of 2015 will resolve this issue by removing the capped-rental requirement for speech-generating devices.

The organizations signing on to this request represent individuals with a wide-range of disabling conditions as well as the providers who serve them, including such conditions as multiple sclerosis, paralysis, hearing and speech impairments, cerebral palsy, visual impairments, spinal cord injuries, brain injury, stroke, ALS, spina bifida, myositis, limb loss, Osteogenesis Imperfecta ("OI"), and other life-altering conditions.

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we appreciate your leadership on this important issue. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this issue in greater detail, please contact Ingrida Lusic, ASHA's director of federal and political advocacy, at 202-624-5951 or ilusic@asha.org.

Sincerely,

AbleNet
ACCSES
American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Association on Health and Disability
American Cochlear Implant Alliance
American College of Rehabilitation Medicine
American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine
American Foundation for the Blind
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
American Therapeutic Recreation Association
Assistive Technology Industry Association
Association for Education and Rehabilitation for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Association of Assistive Technology Act Program
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Brain Injury Association of America
Center for Medicare Advocacy
Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation
Clinician Task Force
Easter Seals
Girl Power 2 Cure
Immune Deficiency Foundation
Institute for Matching Person & Technology
Lakeshore Foundation
LC Technologies
Lingraphica
National Association for Hearing and Speech Action
National Association for Home Care and Hospice
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Disability Rights Network
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Prentke Romich Company
Rettsyndrome.org
Saltillo
Spina Bifida Association
Team Frates
Team Gleason
The ALS Association
The Arc
TobiiDynavox
United Spinal Association