



Action in the States

BY LISE HAMLIN

HLAA's national office is a little more than 10 miles north of Capitol Hill—the epicenter of national lawmaking, where Congress develops, studies and sometimes even passes federal legislation into law.

It's a very exciting and important place to be when advocating for the rights and interests of people with hearing loss. Yet, despite all the attention that Congress gets, the states are where the action is.

Consider this: Between January and May 2019, only 16 pieces of legislation made it through Congress and were signed into law by the president. Not a large number, even bearing in mind that Congress has a two-year session that just got underway and that, typically, more bills are signed into law later—rather than earlier—in the year.

Take now the example of Maryland. In contrast, the state's session lasts only from January into April. In the short time since the beginning of 2019, Maryland passed almost 900 bills. And the state's governor has already signed more than 350 of them into law, with even more slated for signing by summer.

It's very clear that in many ways, it's the states who are the real movers and shakers.

HLAA's Commitment to Helping Our States

HLAA recognizes the important work our members are doing at the local level. That's why we've been helping our states for years, providing support and guidance when requested and when the legislative work supports our mission. HLAA helps states working to include hearing aid coverage in health insurance plans by passing specific laws.

Just recently, we've seen an uptick in the number of consumers eager to see state or local legislation that would provide greater access to hearing loops in public places and/or to ensure that hearing aid dispensers always tell consumers about telecoils and assistive listening devices.

A New Resource

We see an important role for HLAA as our supporters show increased awareness and interest in local legislation. In the coming months, we'll be building a section on the HLAA website devoted to advocacy efforts in the states. There, we'll post or provide links to state and local legislation that has passed, provide information about newly introduced bills—whether by our members or by others—and offer ideas and information on how to become more involved.

In short, we'll build a site where advocates can get the information and support they need to successfully promote local legislation they want enacted.

We invite you to please let us know what you'd like to see on our website. We want to make this state advocacy site as useful to you as we possibly can. We're certain that working together, we can build a resource that truly helps you advance your efforts to change how things are done in your community. **HL**

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