March 2, 2017

The Honorable David P. Roe, MD
U.S. House of Representatives
336 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Dr. Roe:

On behalf of the American Academy of Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery (AAO-HNS), thank you for your leadership in introducing H.R. 849, the “Protecting Seniors’ Access to Medicare Act of 2017.” This important legislation would repeal the Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB), therefore ensuring the continued transparency, debate, and meaningful opportunity for stakeholder input in the development of Medicare policy. The AAO-HNS strongly supports repeal of the IPAB and urges swift passage of H.R. 849.

The AAO-HNS is the world’s largest medical organization representing specialists who treat the ear, nose, and throat, and related structures of the head and neck. The Academy represents approximately 11,000 otolaryngologist—head and neck surgeons in the United States who diagnose and treat disorders of those areas. The medical disorders treated by our physicians are among the most common that afflict all Americans, young and old. They include chronic ear infection, sinusitis, snoring and sleep apnea, hearing loss, allergies and hay fever, swallowing disorders, nosebleeds, hoarseness, dizziness, and head and neck cancer.

The AAO-HNS recognizes the importance of lowering healthcare costs, and is committed to improving the quality and value of our nation’s healthcare. Unfortunately, the IPAB threatens the ability of the people’s elected representatives in Congress to ensure access to the healthcare they need, when they need it. Since Medicare’s inception, Congress has played an essential role in shaping policies that best meet the needs of their communities and their constituents. Leaving Medicare payment decisions in the hands of an unelected, unaccountable governmental body with minimal Congressional oversight will negatively affect timely access to quality healthcare for our nation’s senior citizens and the disabled.

Although IPAB was not “triggered” in 2016, nearly all experts – including Medicare’s trustees – agree that this cost-cutting mechanism will be activated in 2017, likely resulting in significant, arbitrary cuts to Medicare payments for healthcare providers who are already working to keep up with new quality improvement and reporting requirements.

The AAO-HNS applauds your leadership on this critical issue, and we look forward to working with you to ensure passage of H.R. 849. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact the AAO-HNS Legislative Advocacy team at legfederal@entnet.org.

Sincerely,

James C. Denny III, MD
Executive Vice President and CEO