

Hear & Now News

"Supporting Hearing Instrument Providers and The Hearing Impaired Since 1950"

VOL. 2, ISSUE 1

2013 Legislative Report

SLBA HADB Sunset Review Hearing *By Tricia Hunter*

On March 19 a Sunset Review Hearing was held, which would be the first step in the Legislative process to continue the Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology & Hearing Aid Dispensers Board (Board).

State Statute requires every Board in California to go through a review and justification for existence every three to five years. After the review, a bill is introduced by the Chairperson of the Business and Professions Committee to reinstate the Board in Statute. If the bill does not pass the licensing board will go away.

It is very rare for a board to be sunset but it has happened. At one point the Hearing Aid Dispensing Board was sunset and changed to a Bureau. Two years ago, the Board of Registered Nursing was sunset over a fight between the Governor's Office and the Speaker of the Senate.

In preparation for the hearing the Board prepared a Sunset Report (available on the SLPAHADB website, <http://www.speechandhearing.ca.gov/>). In response to the report, the committee staff prepared a report and submitted some questions to the Board. This report is available online at the Senate Business and Professions Committee.

HHP member and SLPA HADB Board member Deanne Manning testified on behalf of the SLPA HADB. Also representing the Board was Annemarie Del Mugnaio, Executive Director, Allison Grimes, SLPA HADB President and audiologist and Carol Murphy a Speech and Language Pathologist. As your lobbyist, I testified to Hearing Healthcare Providers' support of the Board.

Annemarie addressed the concerns of the committee staff. She addressed the budget concerns of reduced staff. She also addressed the length of time it was taking to get a license. New systems have been set up to respond to inquiries about licensing. The Board was asked why enforcement time frames are increasing. The reasons are increased complaints and decreased staffing.

Legislative Report Con't on Page 4...

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 2013 Legislative Report
- 2 Presidents Message
- 3 Executive Director's Report
- 4 Legislative Report Con't
- 6 Annual Conference Registration
- 7 HHP Membership Application
- 8 Unpcoming Events

Presidents Message



On December 12th, 2012 HHP member, Amnon Shalev was appointed by Governor Brown to SLPAHAD Licensing Board. Amnon replaces Sandy Danz whose position on the Board termed out.

HHP congratulates Amnon Shalev as a Hearing Aid Dispenser board member and we thank Sandy for her service on the board.

HHP would also like to congratulate Bill Schenk, BC-HIS, ACA who was elected Chairman of the National Board for Certification in Hearing Instrument Sciences. We look forward to working with Bill and NBC-HIS.

On January 15, 2013 the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) implemented a Medi-Cal reimbursement policy that cut reimbursements to providers nearly fifty percent. As a professional association, HHP is always concerned about the ability to do business in the State of California and public access to hearing aids. HHP quickly found that this reimbursement policy change had a negative impact on many of our members' businesses and

access to Medi-Cal hearing aids. The hearing aid program was nearly inadvertently eliminated by this policy change. We have been through this before and have had success at working with and educating DHCS on the value of the Dispensing community's services when providing hearing aids to Medi-Cal beneficiaries and the importance of this benefit to the geriatric and pediatric hearing impaired populations. DHCS initially held their ground, but thanks to the coordinated efforts of Hearing HealthCare Providers, California Academy of Audiology, CAA Past President Rupa Balachandran, PhD, CCC-A and the amazing legislative efforts of HHP member Amnon Shalev, a moratorium was issued on the reimbursement policy until April 15, 2013. I would also like to recognize and thank Amplifon/Sonus USA for their role in this effort and welcome Amplifon/Sonus USA legislative advocate, Robert Naylor. All stakeholders involved will continue to work with DHCS.

Our convention this year is May 2-5 at the Hyatt San Francisco Airport Hotel in Burlingame. As always, I look forward to seeing friends and colleagues from around the State. We have a great program lined up and I hope you can join us this year!

Please Join HHP in our support for International Hearing Society's "Fit to Serve" Campaign which supports better access to hearing health care for our veterans. You can find more information at www.ihinfo.org

As HHP continues to grow our membership, develop quality educational programs at our Annual Convention and represent the hearing aid dispensing community legislatively, we count on and need your support and involvement. There are many opportunities at the district level to get more involved.

Thank you for your continued support of HHP. See you in San Francisco May 2nd.

Don Tucker, BC-HIS,
President



Executive Directors Report



Spring has sprung and we are happy to introduce a new little one to the HHP family. Staff member Heather Vigil delivered a healthy baby girl on March 30. We are so proud of Heather and wish her and her baby girl all the best.

This year also has brought about some additions to the HHP Managed Care program. We have realized additional contracts including; Epic, Easy Choice, TruHearing, Hear PO and Hearcare Solutions, Three Rivers Provider Network, hiHealth Innovations and Stratose. Three Rivers and Stratose are both networks that provide opportunities to bill a multitude of plans.

On February 12 the Managed Care program featured its first ever webinar. The focus of which was to educate our managed care members on the ever changing healthcare market in California. The webinar was well attended and participants provided very positive feedback. Therefore, the Managed Care committee has plans to schedule additional webinars in the future. In the meantime, plan to join HHP at the Annual Convention for the Managed Care forum scheduled for May 2 from 10:00 am – Noon at the Hyatt Burlingame.

We also welcome members to participate in the President's PAC Reception taking place on May 1 at the Hyatt Burlingame. It's an event to honor those who've supported HHP's advocacy efforts by making donations to the Political Action Committee (PAC) fund. Every donation counts toward helping us to establish connections that have proven vital to the preservation of the hearing healthcare profession, including sustaining reasonable reimbursement rates. It's not too late to donate, enclosed is a donation form.



Richard Wagner, HHP Membership Director, launched a membership drive campaign that is running up to our convention. The One Member Can campaign is still under way and there are few members who stand a chance at earning an iPad. You can too! Check out the details included in this newsletter.

This year started with some challenges and change. The industry continues to pull together to overcome obstacles and improve patient access. The HHP Annual Convention, May 1-4 at the Hyatt Regency Burlingame is an opportunity for hearing professionals to get together to learn, network, have a good time and unite. I hope to see you there!

Gloria Peterson,
Executive Director

2013 Legislative Report Cont'd...

Medi-Cal Reimbursement

The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) proposed changes to the reimbursement policy for hearing aids revising the language from manufacturer list price to acquisition plus a markup. The industry estimates that this policy change would result in an overall 50% reduction in reimbursement to the provider when coupled with the 10 percent cut recently implemented. The amended policy was scheduled to take effect January 15.

In response to this policy change numerous providers notified the Department that they could not continue to provide Medi-Cal hearing aids at the reduced reimbursement.

Over the years, manufacturers have offered a rebate to dispensers to compensate for the low reimbursement of state funded hearing aids. The manufacturers believed in the Medi-Cal program and had come up with a hearing aid plus rebate to providers to keep the program alive with the low reimbursement from the State of California.

The Department has chafed at the idea of providers receiving a rebate on two different occasions and proposed moving to acquisition costs of the hearing aid. In 2004 they implemented this same policy change to acquisition cost plus a markup and destroyed the Medi-Cal network. The Department reversed their decision and worked with HHP to rebuild that network.

In December 2012 the Department once again implemented acquisition cost payment policy. When this proposal was announced, HHP member Amnon Shalov went to Assembly Budget Committee Chairperson Blumenfield and asked for his help. Assemblymember Blumenfield asked the Department to put a moratorium on the proposal and give the Committee a chance to develop a reimbursement proposal through the budget process. The Department refused. In February 2013 the Department held a stake holders meeting

where many providers shared the impact of the proposal and that they were going out of business. Children's Hospitals shared that they could not find providers for children with hearing loss. Long Term Care providers shared similar experiences.

On February 28 the Assembly Budget Committee and Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, Chaired by Assemblymember Holly Mitchell, held a joint hearing on the reimbursement change and the impact on access to hearing aids. The Department had voluntarily implemented a moratorium on the acquisition cost reimbursement proposal until April 15th. The Department also stated they wanted to come up with a new reimbursement proposal by April 15th.

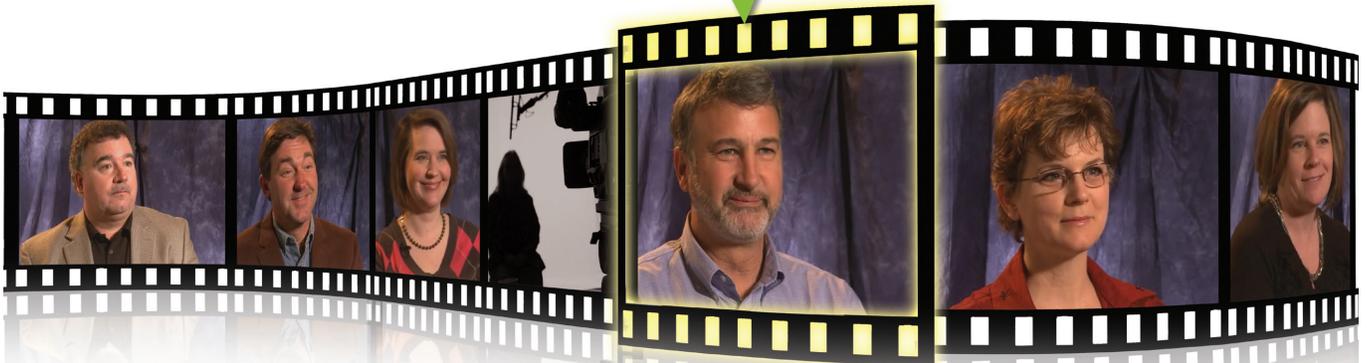
HHP has submitted a proposal for acquisition cost of the hearing aid and a dispensing fee plus all actual costs of providing the hearing aid. We have not heard what the department proposes to do. Their deadline is April 15th and the Budget Committee is monitoring their response.

HHP hopes that a reasonable reimbursement proposal comes forth from the Department. The Department may choose to return to the status quo. Either way we have asked the Budget Committee to submit budget language to require the Department to write regulations to change the "policy" in the future or at least have a hearing. We are hoping not to have to repeat this effort a fourth time.

Since this writing DHCS has put forth a proposal and scheduled a hearing for April 19. HHP will be in attendance and will report further stakeholders meetings.

"AHAA provides insight that you wouldn't normally think about on your own."

Ken Wood, Up-State Hearing Instruments, Redding, CA



When will **YOU** reach your Tipping Point of success?

Tipping Point (tip-ping point) noun
1. a time when important things start happening in a situation.
2. when a significant change takes place.

Our Associates often share with us the moments when they became fully committed to AHAA's proven business model ALL THE RIGHT THINGS, and began to believe in and realize great success, aka, their tipping points. We want to share their stories with you through this interactive series.

<http://success.AHAAnavigator.com> ▶

WATCH OUR INTERACTIVE SERIES:

- Episode 1: All The Right Things
- Episode 2: Block Scheduling
- Episode 3: 3rd Party Attendance
- Episode 4: Out of Warranty
- Episode 5: Patient Referral
- Episode 6: Employee Development
- Episode 7: AHAA Convention (coming soon)



TIPPING-POINT



Registration Open

Hearing Healthcare Providers CA

2013 Annual Convention

"Bridge to Hearing Solutions... Your Golden Opportunity"

May 2-4, 2013

San Francisco Location:

HHPCA is excited to be holding its 2013 Annual Convention at the Hyatt Regency Burlingame located only 15 minutes from downtown San Francisco.

Topics Include:

- Song Beverly
- Advertising and Discipline
- Managed Care
- Cognition Friendly Amplification
- Understanding Your Business to Plan for Tomorrow: Benchmarking

Networking Opportunities:

You will have an opportunity to network with your peers and visit the exhibits which feature the latest in new products, techniques, and services.

Hotel Accommodations:

Hyatt Regency San Francisco Airport Hotel
333 Bayshore Highway,
Burlingame, California, USA 94010
Tel: (650) 347-1234
Rate: \$159 per night
Reference Group Code: **G-HEAR**.

Great Rates! HHPCA was able to negotiate an incredible room rate of \$159 per night for this upscale location. Make your reservations by **April 10, 2013**. Rooms are limited, so don't hesitate, they will book up fast!

*Complete information located on
Events Tab: www.hhpca.org*



One Capitol Mall, Suite 320
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone (916) 447-1975
Fax (916) 444-7462
www.hhpca.org
convention@hhpca.org



Hearing Healthcare Providers California
 One Capitol Mall, Suite 320
 Sacramento, CA 95814
 Phone (916) 447-1975
 Fax (916) 444-7462
 www.hhpca.org

Membership Application

Name: _____ Date: _____

Please mark all that apply:

Hearing Instrument Dispenser **Dispensing Audiologist** **Other** _____

Company Name: _____ Years at Present location: _____

Mailing Address _____

City: _____ ST _____ Zip: _____ E-mail address: _____

Phone: (_____) _____ Fax: (_____) _____

California License: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Number of years in hearing aid field _____

**I hereby make an application for membership in the Hearing HealthCare Providers/California.
 I agree to abide by the Bylaws and the Code of Ethics of the association and to pay membership dues as annually required.**

Signature _____ Date _____

Please make checks payable to HHP California and return with this application or provide your credit card payment information below.

We accept the following credit cards (please circle only one): **MasterCard** **Visa** **AMEX**

Name on Card _____ CC No. _____

CVC _____ CC Billing Zip code _____

Signature _____ Exp. MM/YY _____/_____

**Please check your appropriate member type
 Schedule of Annual Dues:**

- Regular Member** **\$295.00**
- Additional Member Location** **\$100.00**
- Employee Member** **\$195.00**
- Product Manufacturer/ Service Provider** **\$350.00**
- Retired / Student / Support Staff** **\$125.00**

Please name your referring HHP member
 so we can present them with their recognition
 and reward them for helping Grow HHP Membership!

 Referring Member

Contributions or gifts to the Hearing HealthCare Providers California are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. Dues payments are deductible by members as an ordinary and necessary business expense.

Regular Member – Any Hearing Instrument Dispenser who is in good standing can be a member and will have full rights and privileges of membership including voting and holding office
Additional Member Location – For Members with satellite/branch offices and want Directory listing(s)
Employee Member – Any licensed HID, who is the second, third or more member(s) of an office with a full category member, has full membership privileges, including voting and holding office
Retired Member – Any former Regular Member who is no longer a dispenser of hearing aids but still has an active license may do so at this rate and will have full rights and privileges of regular membership; if license is not active can still join at this rate and can vote but not hold office
Product Manufacturer/Service Provider – Any company with an interest in the production, training and sales of products pertaining to the enhancement of hearing
Support Staff/Temporary Licensee Member – Any person who has been issued a temporary license and/or any non-licensed staff of a regular member may not vote or hold office

Save the Date 2013



> **May 2**
President's Reception, Hyatt San Francisco Airport, Burlingame, CA

> **August 4-5**
Board of Directors Retreat, Paradise Point, San Diego, Ca

> **May 3-4**
HHP Annual Convention, Hyatt San Francisco, Airport, Burlingame, CA

> **November 6**
Board of Directors Meeting, Sacramento, CA