



CALL TO ACTION: *ACI Alliance on the Hill—At Home* **Invite Members of Congress to your CI Center, Clinic or School this Summer**

Building on the success of *ACI Alliance on the Hill* held in Washington, DC on October 14, 2015, we request all ACI Alliance members to schedule meetings with your Members of Congress at home! As the 2016 election draws closer, Members of Congress will be looking for positive opportunities this Summer to interact with constituents in their states and Congressional districts. We encourage you to invite your Members of Congress to visit your facility—whether it is a CI center, other clinic or school—to learn about cochlear implants and meet patients.

The purpose of these meetings is two-fold: (1) To share information about cochlear implantation and your work in their district or state and (2) To ask your Senators to support and cosponsor the *Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Act of 2015*, H.R. 1344. (The House already passed this bill.)

Background: ACI Alliance hosted a Congressional advocacy day last October, the day before the start of CI 2015 DC. *ACI Alliance on the Hill* followed a similar advocacy day held in October 2013. The day's activities served as an opportunity for dozens of CI leaders to educate over 100 Congressional offices on the importance of cochlear implantation. ACI Alliance efforts led several Senators to cosponsor the EHDI legislation and also helped secure passage of the bill in the House in 2015.

Developing Congressional champions supportive of CI policy is imperative. The best way to develop Congressional champions is to have them visit your setting (clinic, hospital, university, school) to see—first hand—how you work with CI recipients and the extraordinary outcomes people achieve with this intervention. With Congress out of session from July 16-September 6, we have an ideal visit opportunity.

What you need to do now:

1. Identify Your Congressman and two Senators by Googling “Find Your Senator” or “Find Your Representative.” Enter your zip code to identify your Representative.
2. Click on the Congressman's or Senators' name to open his or her official website. Scroll to the bottom of the website to identify the district or state offices. Phone the office closest to your facility.
3. Request that the Congressional Member visit your CI Center or facility. You may need to follow up with a short email requesting a visit.
4. The purpose of the visit is to have your Member of Congress tour your center and learn more about cochlear implants, including what your center does to support CI. We will also ask you to discuss the pending early intervention legislation.
5. You should directly reference your own experience with cochlear implantation during meetings and consider having a CI patient (child or adult) present.
6. If they are unable to arrange a visit to your clinic, ask to visit the district office to meet with the Senator or Congressman when they have in-state office hours, as a first step.
7. Follow up as these visits are often hastily arranged.

8. Once confirmed, consider inviting local media if the Member's office agrees. Request help from the public affairs office of your hospital, university or school, if your facility has one. This can occur as a reception or brief speech at your Center after the visit to increase exposure for your clinic or school and the Member.
9. Two handouts are attached for your use in planning the Congressional meetings:
 - a. One page background on the pending Early Hearing Detection and Intervention law. The legislation has passed the House. We need to encourage Senators to sign-on as co-sponsors. At this writing, the Senate sponsors include Portman (OH), Gillibrand (NY), Kirk (IL), Cochran (MS), Wicker (MS), Klobuchar (MN), Murphy (CT), Boozman (AR), and Bennett (CO). If your Senator has already signed on as a sponsor, thank them for their early support. If they have not, ask them to sign up a sponsor of this important legislation.
 - b. Interview with Christy Maes, mother of the South Carolina child who has cochlear implants who competed recently in the National Spelling Bee in Washington, DC. The Maes family story is a great example of what can happen when early intervention services are provided properly. Neil Maes is 11 years old and deaf from birth, yet his language is such that he successfully competed with children from all over the US.
10. Touch base with the State Champion from your state to coordinate your state efforts for maximum effect. You can find your ACI Alliance State Champ here:
<https://acialliance.siteym.com/?ACIAStateChamps>
11. Let us know of any contacts you have made and also what transpired (i.e., who was your primary contact, who visited). Also be sure to tell us about any important comments or questions that were communicated during the visit so that we can keep track of what Members of Congress are concerned about. Please send an email to Susan Thomas (sthomas@acialliance) within a week of any visit regarding the above topics.
12. Strive to have all three visits (or as many visits as you can arrange) occur by September 6, 2016.
Good luck!

Don't hesitate to ask if you have questions or need help. Email Donna Sorkin dsorkin@acialliance.org