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CONSUMER: CASEY JUDD

EHDI

NARITA A/B – POLICY AND YOU: ADVOCACY UPDATES FOR EHDI

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>> And then this is Dr. Amy Hartman and she is also an audiologist at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. All right. Let's get going. So we don't have any relevant financial or non‑financial anything to disclose to you. We're simply here because of our passion for advocacy and educating and really teaching each other and you guys teaching us how to be advocates.

Let's talk about the learning objectives. You all saw that in the brochure. So we want you to be able to define some current legislation. We have some federal legislation right now. Things that are up and coming or coming down the path to being finalized. Identify ways in which you can advocate. So not only in the federal level which we'll talk about first but also in your own backyard. So something that everyday that you can do to make a difference. And then some training resources available for the legislative support. So I know that it can be kind of like a little daunting at first to get involved in this and we just are here to reassure you that you can do it and you can make a change.

And there's resources out there to help you do that. Here's an outline. In case you need to refer to our presentation at a later date or you want to share it with somebody else which that is awesome. That's educating and advocating first we want to turn it over to you guys what does advocacy mean for you and we would love if we can have a couple volunteer to share what that means if we have a mic. I know you all have heard of advocacy, right? What does it mean to you? I'll take two people and then we'll stop. Yeah. Yeah. Anyone? You can also tell me and I'll say it if you can ‑‑  
>> (Speaker far from mic).  
>> So she said speak up and out for an issue or a particular problem. So that's a really good definition of advocacy. Another one I heard in the hallway this morning was just sharing a story. Right? So just like sharing your story, your EHDI story and that is advocacy. That is education. It could be, you know, sharing, someone mentioned about a story in the grocery store that they heard and that person gave them their feedback about how they helped them in their early intervention and that is advocacy too because they were sharing their story back and we are kind of like completing that loop of like, wow, you helped me, thank you so much and then keep that loop going and share with everybody at your work, in the elevator, I think you can see I do advocacy everywhere I go. So Merriam‑Webster defines advocacy as promoting a cause or a proposal. You think of those law shows. You're seeing this legislation or this bill go across and you want to push that bill and get a good result for your cause. Stay awake for this part. This is the meat like what helps us in the US of A. It's our three branches of government and they're the foundation so we need to know what they are. First the legislative branch. So this has to do with the House of Representatives and the Senate. So they're called the Congress. Okay and legislative advocacy is if you can think of it as educating or some organizations have lobbyists and they go and speak to their representatives. And they help to educate them on certain issues for instance on early intervention, the EHDI community, on different cultures and that's how you can really push through with the legislative advocacy. They are supposed to make the laws. So they're involved in all different portions of the law making so the implementation especially but also I challenge you to not just think about the implementation but on the forefront of the ideas. Right? So things that we're seeing gaps in our communities especially in our EHDI community are ways that we think that we could help improve the system. And that also can be a way that you can do some legislative advocacy. The next part is the executive branch. I got to get my notes of this because it's more in depth. There's four parts. You have the cabinets, independent agencies, like NASA. The US postal office and the regulatory agencies and then you have the commissions and the federal aviation administration. So the executive branch is huge and believe it or not we put those people there too.

So the government is responsible for enforces the law. We have the President and he is invested with that main duty. They act as the head of the state and the commander in chief of the armed forces.

It's really important to think about how that moves through the system. So Congress, they're making them. We have a lot to do with Congress. We put those people there and then this is the ones that is in charge of enforcing so judicial. You watch those law shows, right, I don't really watch them. I watch other stuff like mysteries but if you watch them there's like the lawyers and the judges in the courtrooms. So it's made of actually three court levels. You have your district courts, your Court of Appeals and then the supreme court so the role of the judicial branch is to interpret our U.S. Constitution. The main reason they exist is to help balance the power from that executive branch to make sure that the law's not interpreted and punished by the same branch. If that makes sense. All right. We got through that. Thank you for your attention. Let's go to the policy stages. So we can see that this is really a continuum. Right? It's never ending. It's constantly changing, morphing. There's constantly new people that come in.

We can look at this in a statewide process. This could be in your own local town hall or all the way up into that federal government. So developing, implementing and assessing the impact of policy. It's a continuum. Policies are proposed after a problem or issue is identified. Once that has occurred an issue is raise. In my time in DC it helped me to realize that we have an issue we really want to talk about it. They want to hear all of that. Right? So these ideas. These things that we're coming up with or the problems we see at the local level is just as important to talk about that at the national and federal level. So assessing the impact is a very important part of the process. What allows us to make the changes that we know work. New policies to be created and for everyone to learn like what was really great about the last EHDI. What needs to change and I think some of us know the grant cycle it did change a little bit so our voice does matter. I'm going to turn it over to Dr. Hartman and she's going to discuss a little bit about current EHDI legislation.  
>> Okay. Hi, everyone. So I'm going to talk about the current issues on the national level that involve our EHDI community and again we're not really getting into all the state issues and local issues because we wanted to talk about things that are going to be relevant to most of us in the room today. So we're going to talk a little bit about IDEA and other school based funding and over things that affect the future professionals coming up in the world and then about some audiology service provision issues going on. So the first thing that's very important to all of us is the funding for IDEA. An IDEA is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act this is the act that allows for children to have a right to free and appropriate public education. What's going on and has been going on the last few years with IDEA is that federal funding is typically, has been ‑‑ should represent about 40% of the average per pupil expense. However, current funding has been about ‑‑ is 17% this year and that's close to what it's been the past few years so IDEA is not getting the funding it needs and so what some school districts have been doing to help supplement this is they've been looking to supplement it with medicaid which is at the state level. But there's been some issues where states have been trying to restrict what's going on with the payment to medicaid and so we're kind of losing funding in that area as well. So so basically funding is going down and down and down and we need more funding. So even though we have the act we're not getting funding that we need so this is something that a lot of our organizations are working towards is trying to advocate for making sure that IDEA is funded and at the appropriate level and as you guys know this effects all the kids that we work with in some way. Another area to consider like I said is our future professionals coming up these are some of my students right here in this picture. Some are in the room. But this is really important because we need to do the best we can to protect them as they are going to school to try and learn and figure out what they need to learn to be the best providers for our kids in the future. So the higher education reauthorization act has been going through legislation for the last couple of years.

And there's been some changes to it that a lot of our organizations, I like ‑‑ these aren't great for us. We need to change this. So we want this to be reauthorized but we're looking for change to what's going on with it right now. So we want to make sure that it protects some accrediting agencies so all of our schools, our universities, are accredited by different agencies and they make sure that what our students are getting is the best education. So that they can provide the best services for the kids that we all know and love. So we need to protect these accrediting agencies so that they can do their job. Also we want to make sure that students are able to borough from federally funded student loan programs because there's been some recent legislation that are trying to restrict that and not allow them to borrow the money that they might need to get themselves through school.

They also want to eliminate something where they're going to get rid of loan forgiveness and that's a problem because the loan forgiveness was given to students that would go out in the world and then work in a more maybe rural community which we all know is very much needed in, you know, in the United States and elsewhere and so we want to make sure that is not something taken away as well. Other issues, introduced in 2017 is the frontline care act this goes along with what I was just talking about. It allows student loan repayment in exchange for health care professionals providing two years of service in a health care facility that has frontline scarcity area. So again this might be more rural areas. It could be more you shall ‑‑ urban areas. So we want to make sure they are included as someone who can take advantage of this so they can go out and get into these areas that we need we need our professionals in. This is something that happened last year. They were looking for when they were doing the whole tax reform. They wanted to have ‑‑ it originally included kind of provision that would treat a tuition waiver that students would get as taxable income.

So basically when our students would get a waiver for having an assistantship or working in a lab or working for a program, then they would tax that and so it was very hurtful for our students because they were being taxed on money that they weren't really making and because of advocacy efforts by some of our organizations we got that removed so I wanted to share this as an advocacy success, but it did happen last year but that was a success that was done with some of our organizations working hard to get that removed. Related to audiology service provision. I actually did this slide a couple days ago and oh my gosh, it's changed. This was a big, if you are an audiologist in the room. The audiologist patient choice act is something we've been talking a lot about. My colleague is in Washington right now working with ASHA and she said guess what, we're changing this act. It's going to be something different. It's great that it's changing because it's a couple of our professional organizations have come together. And decided on making a few changes. So it's actually amazing to see these professional organizations working together. And it's going to be a very similar to what's been proposed in audiology patient choice but it is going to be slightly different. It's trying to provide direct access with medicare. You guys think why do I care about medicare because these are kids. The thing about medicare is it typically dictates all other insurance once medicare does something then every other insurance starts doing it so it starts with medicare in the adults and then goes down and we'll start seeing these changes as well for our pediatric population.

Another great thing with this is that it includes reimbursement for oral rehabilitation or oral habilitation services for audiologists which has not been typically been something that was covered this the past so this is really important for our EHDI population because we want to be able to provide these services for our kids. This is another act. It's more on the adult end but important for us in the future. This is the Medicare Telehealth Parity Act. This is going to expand the list of providers that are eligible for reimbursement for telehealth to include audiologists and speech language pathologist so right now theirs is a number of different health care professionals that are a part of this group.

But they are going ‑‑ we want them to include audiologists and speech language pathologists so we have the ability to also be reimbursed for services where we're able to provide telehealth. So tele‑intervention or tele‑audiology which again if you have been to other sessions you know that's a big area that we're looking into to provide services to people that don't live near a facility.

So that they can get those services. So, again, it's looking at medicare, but we're hoping that that will pass and it will trickle down. Another thing very important to all of us is we want to protect EHDI initiatives so in 2018 we know EHDI was reauthorized for another five years which is great but our full funding hasn't been given to us yet. So full funding of EHDI for 2020 is something that should be very important for all of us and something we need to think about and consider. All right. I'm going to have Hanna come up. We are going to talk about what you can do now that you know the issues.  
>> All right. So can I just have like a ‑‑ hand raise if you have gone to educator legislator or to your capitol. So we actually have a good number here so that makes me really happy to see. I'm sure that those of you who have gone you may have had those butterflies before you went or those who haven't gone it can seem daunting but I promise you that it's not, right? Those people are there because you put them there. They're there to represent your community. Let that empower you to contact them. To set up a visit. So we're going to talk about just some of the things you can do. You can write a letter. There's so many times that I've been in offices where you see like the stack of letter and trust me their aides are opening them and reading them. You can send on e‑mail where you are really far but there's something you are passionate about that makes a difference. Send an e‑mail. Put your personal story. Just begin your journey. If you want to make an in‑person visit I will talk about how to do that as well. Sitting there, human to human, talking about it. Make a phone call so sometimes you might just be in between meetings or you're a grad student and you're just like, oh my gosh, I can't do any of these other things, find a way to contact them. Every communication is actually logged and that's something you should know. The main thing that I want to hit on in this slide is to share your story. Right? I have two instances where I was in a legislator's office talking about EHDI saying this is so important and why you should care. And they said, well, I need story because when I go and tell other people about this that are going to help support this act, I need to have something that they can cling onto, that they can really feel in their gut and in their heart so I did that. I talked about why I had a passion for what I was doing and why those little kids mattered and their family mattered and I had a phone call and they said we got another sponsor and it was because I shared the story. So thank you, because that matters. So just want to reiterate that that each and every one of you have a story and something that you can share and it's really, really important and people do listen. If you're sharing a story that's not your own just make sure you identify because of HIPAA reasons. Be registered to vote. The aides are checking when they have the list of people coming that day. I know that sounds crazy but be registered or make sure someone in your group is. Call the office to schedule a meeting. We have done it via e‑mail but send it phone, try to get more than one option in there. And then have a folder ready of important information. So you're going to want to have your PDF, right? That's going to send in an e‑mail after but while you're there hand them something tangible. When I was in another legislator's office on their desk it was like there was the stacks and I saw mine from the last time I saw them and I said can you pull that out. Can we talk about this again. That's random and that might have been annoying to them but it was there and they had it and it was continuing to come up because they're bombard with a lot of things. If it's something you're passionate about make sure they know that. Once your meeting's concluded send them a thank you e‑mail. Not only did you give them that thank you card. Those in your folder that had all the information in it, but you sent them an e‑mail and a PDF of anything you gave them. The PDF is important because you know that that's going to translate and they have it and they can use it any time. This was used by the Hearing Health Foundation to help educate legislators to pass the EHDI act in 2015. So now Brooke's going to come on up and talk about how to get involved at the local level.  
>> Obviously we have a room of very involved people here today. But we just want to provide you with some already established organizations if you prefer to advocate through the organizations. Up on the board here. With have student academy of audiology. National Student Speech Language Hearing Association for students. We have the American academy of audiology, the let's see, Hands & Voices. Hearing Loss Association of America. And this is just to name a few. There's also NADYS and other organizations for involvement and advocacy. So these are the resources that we ‑‑ for you guys you may find this helpful as you travel through your advocate journey.

Starting with who represents you and then more details as you progress through your advocacy journey. These are our references for our presentation. And one last or two last quotes we want to leave you all with as an EHDI community everyone at this conference is here to better the lives and families of children with hearing loss. Through advocacy and education we can serve as the hands and feet for those who cannot advocate for themselves and we want to leave you guys with a challenge to put your passion into action. What questions do you have? All right. Thank you very much.  
>> (Applause).