



Medicare Expansion: Hearing Health Priorities

On behalf of the Hearing Industries Association (HIA) and the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA), we express our strong support for the aging hearing loss community as the expansion of Medicare is considered. The number one request HLAA receives is from seniors on limited incomes who need hearing aids asking about Medicare coverage or financial assistance. **Hearing health is essential and, given the prevalence of hearing loss and associated comorbidities, we firmly support broader access to hearing services and treatments.**

As Congress works to promote health equity and reduce disparities under a Medicare expansion framework, we urge inclusion of coverage of hearing services and treatment (including hearing aids) to be provided by physicians, audiologists, and hearing aid specialists licensed under state law and support meaningful access to effective, innovative treatment through the appropriate classification of hearing device. Specifically, we call on Congress to include the following provisions under any policy to expand Medicare coverage:

- **Beneficiary Access to Licensed Hearing Care Professionals:** With the prevalence of hearing loss, it is important to authorize all licensed hearing health care professionals – including physicians, audiologists, and hearing aid specialists licensed under state law – to provide services and treatment to meet the future needs of our growing Medicare population.
- **Device Classification:** Previously passed legislation to expand Medicare coverage to hearing services and treatment (H.R. 3, 116th Congress) appropriately classified hearing aids as prosthetic devices and included an exemption from the competitive bidding framework. Hearing loss is a serious medical condition, and the classification of hearing aids as prosthetic devices exempt from competitive bidding will support effective, innovative, and comprehensive treatment strategies to meet the growing needs of Medicare beneficiaries.
- **Beneficiary Choice:** To the extent an individual requires a hearing aid to address their specific loss but prefers a device with additional sophistication in functionality and features, we support allowing the beneficiary to choose a device (in consultation with their hearing health care professional) that works best for them and pay any difference above the Medicare-covered amount (“top up”).
- **Medicare Audiologist Access and Services Act (H.R. 1587/S. 1731):** The Medicare Audiologist Access and Services Act (MAASA) would allow for direct access to audiology services and allow audiologists to provide Medicare-covered services and treatment within their scope of license. We support MAASA to ensure access to audiologists and fair and adequate reimbursement for provided services.

Hearing loss has many negative physical, social, and emotional implications, and we applaud Congress in pursuing broader access to hearing health for Medicare beneficiaries. We encourage continued support for effective, innovative treatment by appropriately classifying hearing devices as prosthetics, exempt from competitive bidding, and preserving beneficiary choice through inclusion of a top up provision. To promote access, we emphasize the importance of authorizing licensed hearing care professionals to provide covered Medicare services and treatment, including hearing aids, within scope of license under state law.