

June 9, 2025

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Democratic Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Majority Leader Thune and Democratic Leader Schumer:

We are writing on behalf of the Friends of the Congressional Hearing Health Caucus (FCHHC) to urge you to oppose Medicaid funding cuts or program changes that will limit eligibility or access to hearing health care devices and services. FCHHC consists of nonprofit hearing health organizations that serve as a trusted resource on hearing health and related research for members of Congress and congressional staff.

Our diverse membership includes representatives of the hearing health industry, patient advocates, and clinicians who diagnose and treat hearing loss and balance disorders, fit and program hearing aids, and advocate for increased access to the services and supports necessary to communicate effectively. Our organizations represent millions of people with, and at risk of, hearing loss, and the broad range of hearing health professionals who care for them. Hearing loss is a serious health condition that impacts more than 38 million Americans. The occurrence of hearing loss spans a range of age and occupational groups – including infants, school-aged students, and adults, veterans, and seniors.

Medicaid coverage for many hearing devices—including hearing aids, cochlear implants, and bone-anchored devices and related services—is optional under federal law for adults. For children, each state Medicaid program determines the medical necessity standards for coverage of these devices and services.

Although at present a majority of state Medicaid programs cover these devices and related services for children under age 21 as part of the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment benefit, they remain *optional* for most Medicaid-enrolled adults. Proposals to cut and limit access to Medicaid will force states to make difficult choices regarding what optional devices and services Medicaid may cover.

Importantly, hearing health care broadly demonstrates strong return on investment for both children and adults, ultimately saving the health system resources as hearing health care has been shown to prevent costly complications of hearing loss across the lifespan.[i] Those with untreated hearing loss will cost more to care for in the long run than those who receive proper treatment.[ii] In addition, older adults with untreated hearing loss are at higher risk of dementia, cognitive decline, falls, depression and social isolation.[iii] [iv] Technologies like cochlear implants even result in cost-savings for the individual and the healthcare system. For a child

with severe to profound hearing loss who receives an early cochlear implant, the lifetime savings to society is estimated to be \$217,000 due to lower educational costs and a reduction in earnings losses.[v] For older adults, studies show that untreated hearing loss is associated with 46% higher total healthcare costs over a 10-year period and reduced potential earnings across all age groups.[ii] [iv] Ensuring hearing health care devices and services are widely accessible under Medicaid is crucial for the health and productivity of those with hearing loss.

As responsible stewards of federal dollars, we support Medicaid policies that improve health outcomes, preserve access to care, and reduce costs. We urge you to ensure hearing health care access for Medicaid eligible populations by opposing changes to the Medicaid program that would impede access to needed coverage including restrictive work requirements, reducing federal Medicaid matching funds, and restrictions on the use of provider taxes.

Please contact Josh Krantz, Director of Federal Affairs, Health Care at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, at jkrantz@asha.org if you have any questions or want additional information.

Sincerely,

Academy of Doctors of Audiology (ADA)
Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (AG Bell)
American Academy of Audiology (AAA)
American Cochlear Implant Alliance (ACI Alliance)
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)
Ear Community
Hearing Health Foundation (HHF)
Hearing Industries Association (HIA)
Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA)
International Hearing Society (IHS)

[i] <https://magazine.med.miami.edu/the-high-cost-of-hearing-loss/>

[ii] <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2018/patients-with-untreated-hearing-loss-incur-higher-health-care-costs-over-time>

[iii] <https://www.achievestudy.org/>

[iv] <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38742597/>

[v] <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/lary.31497>

[vi] <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32332454/>