February 25, 2021

Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Chairman Bean and Members of Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on HHS:

I write on behalf of the American Cochlear Implant Alliance (ACI Alliance) in opposition to Amendment #302884 to Florida Senate Bill 700. This amendment would remove the current state requirement that individuals receive an evaluation and testing by a licensed audiologist and instead allow individuals to simply sign a waiver prior to receiving a hearing aid. ACI Alliance is a non-profit organization of cochlear implants surgeons, speech language pathologists, audiologists, consumer and family members of children with hearing loss, and educators of children who are deaf and hard of hearing. I am currently the Chairwoman of the Board of ACI Alliance, a member of Florida Academy of Audiology, and an audiologist and Director of the Hearing Implant Program at the University of Miami.

The purpose of the audiology examination is to diagnose, manage, and then develop appropriate treatment plans, which may include the fitting of hearing aids, for patients. The removal of professional evaluation and replacement with an individual waiver is contrary to the best interest of patients with hearing loss. They may have ear disease and/or comorbidities contributing to or causing their hearing difficulties which may require medical or surgical treatment. Audiologists are trained to not only measure and characterize the type and degree of hearing loss to ensure amplification devices are appropriately selected and prescribed, but also to recognize through their evaluation when consumers should seek medical treatment as recommended by the Food and Drug Administration.

The existing statutory language requiring appropriate evaluation from a licensed audiologist was specifically included to protect consumers. Individuals attempting to select a hearing aid without professional assistance may at best pay for a device that does not meet their needs and at worst, further damage their hearing or fail to receive timely treatment for a medical condition.

In order to better protect Floridians, please vote no on Amendment #302884.
Sincerely,

Meredith A. Holcomb, AuD, CCC-A
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