



January 18, 2023

The Honorable Drew Stokesbary
Washington House of Representatives
416 Sid Snyder Ave SW
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Representative Stokesbary :

I am writing on behalf of the membership of American Cochlear Implant Alliance—a non-profit organization of parents of children with hearing loss, adults with hearing loss, cochlear implant clinicians, and educators of children who are deaf and hard of hearing. The American Cochlear Implant Alliance (ACI Alliance) supports the Health Care Authority (HCA) budget priorities that include funding for cochlear implantation (CI) in adults. We urge your committee promote the HCA budget priority on CIs so that Washington State can join the majority of States that offer this life-changing intervention for adults.

Cochlear implantation is a well-known and established procedure that has been approved by the FDA for use in adults since 1985 and in children since 1990. Cochlear implants play a critical role in restoring the ability to perceive speech and environmental sounds for appropriate individuals with moderate to profound hearing loss who do not benefit sufficiently from hearing aids because of the severity of their deafness. Cochlear implants allow recipients to communicate freely including participating in the workforce, caring for themselves and family members, and enjoying important quality of life improvements.

Without intervention with appropriate hearing assistive technology, adults with untreated or undertreated hearing loss may experience a downward trajectory in quality of life. Not only does it impact communication and socialization, hearing loss also has comorbidities which increase chance of falls and dementia. The financial impact of adult hearing loss is growing. In 2002, lost productivity attributed to hearing loss was \$1.4 billion; this is expected to grow to \$9 billion by 2030 (Stucky, Wolf & Kuo, 2010). By providing hearing intervention for adults, your state will be able to mitigate some of this loss.

This coverage will also benefit those who were implanted as children under Medicaid and transition at age 21. When a state Medicaid program does not cover cochlear implantation for adults, it can mean a person loses access to sound when their processor becomes obsolete or is damaged. Many of those young adults are still in school or getting started in their work life and do not yet have private insurance.

Please support the Governor's budget request for continued support of access to cochlear implantation. I am happy to answer any further questions.

Sincerely,

Donna Sorkin
Executive Director
American Cochlear Implant Alliance