



NATIONAL HEARING CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

July 19, 2009

The Honorable Mike Ross
U.S. House of Representatives
2436 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Ross:

The National Hearing Conservation Association (NHCA) commends you on your leadership on hearing health care issues and for leading the fight on promoting policies that benefit individuals with hearing loss.

NHCA is a multidisciplinary professional organization committed to the prevention of hearing loss due to noise and other environmental factors in all sectors of society. Its members include audiologists, physicians, engineers, industrial hygienists, researchers, military personnel, manufacturers and hearing conservation service providers among others. The unifying interest of this expert group is the prevention of noise-induced hearing loss, especially in the workplace. Our mission is to prevent hearing loss due to noise and other environmental factors in all sectors of society.

NHCA endorses the Medicare Hearing Health Care Enhancement Act of 2009 (HR 3024) to provide Medicare beneficiaries with the option of going to an audiologist or physician directly for hearing and balance diagnostic tests. This bill would improve Medicare beneficiaries' access to hearing care without diminishing the important role of medical doctors, or expanding the scope of practice for audiology.

As you know, the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program, administered by the Office of Personnel Management, and many private health plans now allow participants in their respective health care programs direct access to audiologists as well. The Department of Veterans Affairs has allowed veterans to see an audiologist directly since 1992 and has indicated that direct access to audiology services provides quality hearing health care and is "cost effective."

NHCA appreciates the opportunity to work with you and other organizations to promote this important initiative in the 111th Congress. We thank you for being a champion of hearing health and for your dedication to the needs of individuals with hearing loss and the health care professionals providing the services they need to fully function in society.

Sincerely,

Rick Neitzel, MS, CIH
President, NHCA

cc: American Academy of Audiology